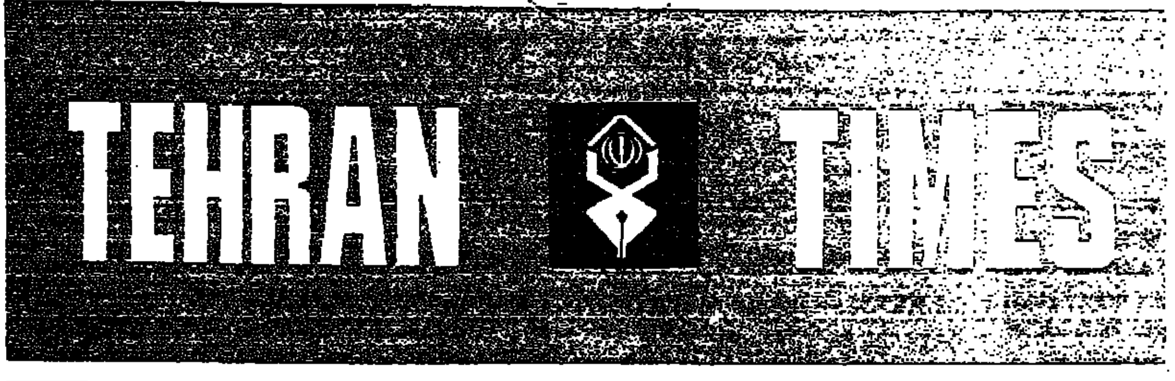
Bomb Blast Triggers New Tensions in Karachi

KARACHI — Fresh tension gripped the Pakistani port city of Karachi Sunday after a deadly bomb blast outside the home of a political activist gunned down hours earlier, residents said.

The bomb killed a cousin of slain activist Mahmood Ahmed Khan, who belonged to the MQM-Haqiqi faction, a splinter group of the powerful Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), police said.

Three people were wounded, witnesses and hospital sources said.

(Contd on Pg. 14)



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Coalition Leaders Discuss Joint Offensive Against Taleban

TALUQAN, Afghanistan — Anti-Taleban coalition leaders have begun discussing strategy for a co-ordinated offensive against the militia, officials told AFP Sunday.

"The meeting was between the big three - Ahmed Shah Masood, General Abdul Rashid Dostam and Karim Khalili," said an official in Baghlan provincial center of Taluqan, 250 kilometers (156 miles) north of Kabul.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Iran Condemns Mykonos Court in Nationwide Rallies



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The German Embassy here was capped with tens of thousands of demonstrators from different walks of life who gathered Sunday, protesting against a Berlin court ruling and the U.S. and Israel which are behind the fiasco.

The protesters, marching from Tehran University's mosque to German Embassy, burned the flags of Germany, Israel and the U.S. and denounced the Tel Aviv and Washington for masterminding the Zionist plot.

The demonstrators, carrying portraits of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, and the Father of the Islamic Revolution Late Imam Khomeini, chanted slogans denouncing Germany, Israel and the U.S.

Addressing the demonstrators, a Tehran representative in the Majlis, Reza Akrami, blasted the German judiciary for its offense against the Islamic system.

Those who claim to be the advocates of human rights and democracy even refrained from hearing our statements and preferred to rely on the witnesses of a bunch of terrorists and hijackers.

"It will be difficult for Germany to rebuild its damaged image and position in Iran," he warned, demanding that the German judiciary and government apologize Iran.

Families of the victims of chemical attacks during the 1980-1988 Iraqi war against Iran, were also present in the demonstrations. They have recently sued German firms which supplied Iraq with chemical weapons technology.

One of the demonstrators told the *Tehran Times* that the U.S., failing to impose economic sanctions against Iran, encouraged Germany to create the recent fiasco.

The history has proved that the Islamic Republic of Iran is powerful enough to cope with the plots, thus, if Tehran severed its relations with Bonn there would be no problem.

One of the university students who was present in the demonstrations told the *Tehran Times* that the Mykonos case is a scenario totally conjured up by the U.S. and the Zionist regime.

Another participant in the protest rallies said that Washington is serving the interests of the Zionists. However the plot is doomed

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Majlis Calls For Review of Tehran-Bonn Relations

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Members of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) here on Sunday called for fully revision of Tehran's relations with Bonn.

Speaking at the open session of Majlis, Vice-Speaker Hojjatoleslam Hassan Rowhani said that "the Mykonos Court brought under question the strategic and long-term interests of Germany in the region," he said.

Rowhani who is also the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council urged the government to speed up the proceeding to receive DM 300 million damages concerning the submarine contract and DM 18 billion damages concerning the Germany's failure to complete the Bushehr Atomic Power Plant as well as suspend Iran's investment in eastern parts of Germany.

He requested the Judiciary to speed up taking legal action against the German firms which supplied Iraq with long-range missiles and chemical arms during the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-1988).

Rowhani said that the Parliament would follow up reassessment of relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran with Bonn through its special Commission on Foreign Policy.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Saudi Troops Move In on Iranian Pilgrims at Mecca

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Saudi troops took up positions on Sunday outside the headquarters of Iranian pilgrims in Mecca in an attempt to prevent anti-U.S. demonstrations, IRNA reported.

"Saudi security forces and soldiers have deployed in front of the headquarters of the Iranian representation" in Mecca, where the annual Muslim pilgrimage began Thursday, IRNA said.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Peres, Netanyahu Discuss Forming Unity Government

BAIT-UL-MOQADDAS — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Shimon Peres discussed forming a unity government to deal with Israel-Palestinian negotiations to reach a final status agreement, Israeli media reported Sunday.

Netanyahu revealed Friday he was considering the idea because members of his right-wing coalition may not give him the support needed to complete negotiations with the Palestinians.

Israel's Army radio said Peres confirmed to the station in a telephone interview that he had

(Contd on Pg. 14)



GAZA, Gaza Strip (April 13): Palestinian police check identities of Palestinian workers on their way to work into Israel through Erez checkpoint northern Gaza Strip at dawn. Israel decided to lift it seige imposed since March 21. Some 20,000 Palestinians aged more than 35, married and granted authorization from Israel's Internal Security Agency Shin Beth were expected to cross.

(AFP PHOTO)

Velayati Confers With Afghan Prime Minister



HEKMATYAR



VELAYATI

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Velayati and Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar here Saturday exchanged views on latest developments in Afghanistan.

During the meeting, the Iranian foreign minister stressed the urgency for finding peaceful solutions to the situation in Afghanistan.

He said the Islamic Republic of Iran had always been concerned about the situation in Afghanistan and that it had done what it could to return peace to the neighboring country.

The prime minister of Afghanistan appreciated the logical position of Iran in relation to Afghanistan as well as its humanitarian assistance to his

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Nations Express Concern Over Berlin Court Verdict

By Ali Rezvani Moqaddam

MECCA — Participants in the Sixth Ahl-ul Bait World Assembly in Mecca expressed concern over the obvious intervention of Zionist agents in the outcome of the Mykonos case.

The congress, in a statement, said the language of the verdict was insulting to leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran's and a challenge to Islamic nations all over the world.

Hundreds of participants from India, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Australia, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Turkey, Brazil, England, France, United States, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan joined in the condemnation and said it was a continuation of hostile plots of enemies against Muslims throughout the world.

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In the Name of God

And they swear by Allah that they are most surely of you, and they are not of you, but they are a people who are afraid (of you)

(HOLY QORAN) (9:56)

OPINION

Unity Government Cannot Save So-Called Peace Process

The Prime Minister of the Zionist regime, Benjamin Netanyahu has confessed that he has not enough support in his rightwing coalition to save the so-called peace process. This is why he is moving towards forming a unity government with opposition Labor Party led by Shimon Peres the former prime minister and architect of the Oslo and Madrid agreements.

Because of several reasons even a unity government will not be able to restore peace to the Middle East through land-for-peace deals.

First of all if a peace attempt is to succeed in the Middle East it must be a comprehensive one, i.e., unless the question of all Palestinians scattered throughout the world is settled, the problem of the Golan Heights is resolved, and the issue of South Lebanon is properly taken care of, there cannot be any honorable peace in the Middle East.

Secondly, the UN has already issued several resolutions on the question of Arab-Israeli dispute. As a gesture of goodwill, the Zionist regime should unconditionally and immediately implement those resolutions. The Arabs should not sit behind the negotiation table with the Zionists unless those resolutions are implemented.

Thirdly, there does not exist a reliable party in Israel to deal with. The Palestinians do not really know whom to deal with in Israel. The Likud Party is a divided house itself; the main sponsor of the talks, the U.S., has lost its credibility, and as a result the edifice of peace process has crumbled.

The future is very gloomy. There is no hope for the success of the Palestinians through negotiations with any Israeli government. The only alternative is therefore a strong Arab-Islamic front to force Israel and its patrons to implement the UN resolutions as the first step toward peace in the region.

If negotiation is to be adopted as a means to crisis settlement in the Middle East, all concerned parties should be represented in the talks. Otherwise any peace talk barring certain groups will definitely lead to another fiasco. Because the U.S. has lost its credibility, the Middle East crisis should be settled under the auspices of the United Nations.

700 kg of Opium Confiscated in Zahedan

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Some 700 kgs of opium were seized from smugglers in an armed encounter in Zahedan, in the southeastern Province of Sistan-Baluchestan on Sunday, an IRNA report said.

One smuggler was injured and two Kalashnikov rifles were seized from the drug traffickers.

According to another report from IRNA, the Law Enforcement Forces in Torbat-e-Jam and Taibad in Khorasan Province have confiscated a total of 585.3 kg of opium.

A communique issued by the Public Relations Department of the provincial Law Enforcement Forces said that the drugs were discovered in the wake of routine checks of vehicles and after a skirmish with armed gangs in the desert regions.

Four smugglers were arrested and their vehicles along with three hand grenades and one assult rifle confiscated in this connection.

Armenian, Jewish, Assyrian Communities Condemn Berlin Court's Ruling

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Iranian Armenians, Jews and Assyrians, attending the rallies held in front of the German Embassy here in protest to the Berlin court verdict against Iran, issued statements condemning the baseless remarks of the court's judge.

In its statement, the Armenian Prelacy Council of Tehran said Iran is itself a victim of international terrorism, adding that the German court was politically-motivated.

The meddling of global arrogance in the procedure of the court and in judicial affairs of Germany was aimed to deviate the nations' concern from its failure in Arab-Isreal peace talks, the statement added.

It also said that the verdict was against international norms and values, mutual respect and bilateral cooperation among the world governments and nations.

The Jewish community in another statement said that the Iranian Jews denounce the new plot of Iranian nation's enemies, who use the Mykonos case as a disguise for their political objectives.

The arrogant powers, in their new propaganda campaign against the Islamic Republic of Iran, rely on the political measures taken in the German court and seek to create an anti-Iran image in the world's public opinion.

The statement also voiced the Iranian Jews' support for the Islamic Republic of Iran under the leadership of Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Stressing that the verdict has been based on testimonies given by terrorists and hijackers, it said that the court has politicized the judicial procedures.

The Association of Iranian Assyrian also issued a statement saying that the Mykonos case only displayed a German ploy to make Iran retreat from its anti-arrogance stance.

Bodies of 20 Iranian Martyrs to Be Delivered to Iran

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Head of the Committee in Charge of search for Those Missing in Action said here Sunday that the bodies of 20 Iranian martyrs of Sacred Defense are to be exchanged for the bodies of 55 Iraqi soldiers on April 15.

IRNA quoted Brigadier General Mirfeisal Baqerzadeh as saying that the swap of bodies will be done following the negotiations between Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Akbar Velayati and his Iraqi counterpart to improve relations between the two countries.

Military experts from both sides are to conduct technical studies on joint research operations, the brigadier general said.

Kargozaran Supports Khatami's Presidency

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — In a communique issued here Friday, Kargozaran-e Sazandegi (promoters of national construction) announced that they would vote for Hojjatoleslam Seyed Mohammad Khatami in the forthcoming presidential elections slated for May 23.

The group said that the fifth president of Iran should be capable of perpetuating the national construction drive and ensure national development along with social equity.

It also expressed hope that voters nationwide would cast their ballot in favor of Seyed Mohammad Khatami if they aspired for a reputable, well developed, and happy Iran.

Majlis Deputies Call For a Review of Tehran-Bonn Ties

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Several Majlis representatives, here Sunday, called for a review of Irano-German ties.

A member of the Presiding Board of Majlis, Mohsen Yahyavi, calling for reconsidering Tehran-Bonn ties said Sunday that economic issues and mutual interests can be taken into consideration as long as sanctities and ideals of the Islamic Revolution are respected.

Stressing that Iran will not sign any new agreement with the German government, Yahyavi told IRNA that the Islamic Republic will honor the contracts it has already concluded with Germany.

Reminding that the politically-motivated ruling of the German court will have very little impact on Iran, Yahyavi, a deputy from Tehran, said severe and specific conditions should be drawn and applied on any country that recalls its ambassador from Iran.

Meanwhile, a lawyer member of the Guardians Council Seyed Reza Zavarei commenting over the issue said in Sanandaj on Sunday that the politically-motivated ruling of the Mykonos court is void in world's judicial systems.

The verdict has been based on testimonies given by witnesses who had not been present in the



YAHYAVI

scene of the incident, he said adding, this is the most important reason demonstrating that the German judicial system's attitude was politically-motivated.

In judicial affairs, a witness is a person who is present in the scene of the incident, he stipulated adding that the witnesses of the Mykonos court were treacherous persons affiliated to intelligence agencies of the enemies of the Islamic Revolution who are under prosecution in Iran.

Zavarei said that the charges leveled against the Islamic Republic are not just and the Muslim nation of Iran will not leave them unanswered.

IPO Marks Martyrdom Anniversary of Iranian Pilgrims in Mecca

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The Islamic Propagation Organization (IPO) issued a statement here yesterday in commemoration of the martyrdom anniversary of Iranian pilgrims in Mecca on Zil-Hajjeh 6, 1407 Hijira (April 14, 1987).

The anniversary coincides with the eve of martyrdom anniversary of the Fifth Imam of Infallible Household of Prophet Mohammad (S), Imam Mohammad Baqer (AS).

The statement said that Zil-Hajjeh 6 marks the Red Friday, the day the blood of the Hajj pilgrims of the Divine sanctuary was shed by the U.S. in the altar of freedom and the site of circumambulation for the Almighty's obedience.

Imam Baqer (AS) was well-known throughout the world of Islam as Baqer-ul-Ulum which means the 'splitter of sciences'. He was distinguished for his moral virtue and scientific dimension.

The holy Imam was poisoned and martyred and buried in Baqi' Cemetery in Medina.

Experts Assembly Condemns German Court's Verdict

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — In a statement released here Saturday night, the Experts Assembly condemned the politically-motivated verdict issued by the German Judiciary, IRNA reported.

The statement said, "The impudence of the German judicial officials is to the extent that they sacrilege the sanctities of the Iranian nation by relying on the baseless claims of (Iranian) fugitives, hijackers, thieves, hypocrite criminals and terrorists and thus give legal and judicial overtone to their mischief."

Such a decision, continued the statement, has put the conscientious people of the world in deep regret.

Greek Dailies Criticize EU Double Standards

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Greek dailies have criticized the stance of the European Union against Iran based on the remarks of a German Court accusing Iran of assassination of four Kurdish oppositions in Berlin in 1992.

According to an IRNA report from Athens, a major Greek daily has criticized the European Union for double-standards, another paper questioned if the German court verdict against Iran was not influenced by political considerations, while one daily said the biggest loser will be Germany.

Daily *Eleftherotypia*, wrote on Saturday that Germany was annoyed by Greece's refusal to withdraw its ambassador from Tehran. Nobody recalls its ambassador when Israel kills people abroad, it added.

When it is known that Israel, for national security reasons, undertakes expedition in other countries, and carries out decisions of the Ministerial Cabinet, nobody ever imagines of recalling its ambassador, or to mobilize international organizations against this country. Two measures and two standards, said the paper.

Eleftherotypia published a full-page report on the crisis between Iran and Germany under the title, "Differences Within the European Union Over Sanctions Against Iran".

The daily published a photo showing Iranians demonstrating outside the German Embassy in Tehran.

Daily *Exousia* noted that recently Iran's relations with the Persian Gulf states were improving and all signs pointed that normalization of Iran's relations with her neighbors would lead to a progress in the critical dialog with the EU.

"Is it possible that a court verdict would overturn a rapprochement which is underscored by vital geopolitical, economic and commercial interests," asked the Greek daily.

The question remains open is, if it was a clean judicial decision without political intervention or if it was related to an act of appeasement by Bonn towards Washington, wrote the paper.

Exousia opined that the current crisis was only temporary and concluded that one thing is crystal clear, neither Tehran nor the 15 (EU members) have anything to gain from further escalation.

Daily *Athinaiki*, which began publication this week, in an opinion column said nobody was impressed by the urgency with which the Dutch presidency of the EU reacted following the German court verdict.

The paper reported that EU countries, with a few exceptions, had since weeks taken the battle position awaiting the German court ruling.

Diplomats in Brussels discussed the possibility of imposing arms embargo on Iran and of expelling their diplomats.

Athinaiki noted that Washington's claims that Iran supports terrorism is not supported by any evidence.

The paper stressed that interests of EU countries are at odds, but for the time being everything shows that Germany will be the biggest loser.

Iran, Japan to Hold Painting Exhibition in Tehran

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The painting works of Iranian and Japanese children is to be displayed at Bahman Cultural Center here on April 27.

According to IRNA, the exhibition's motto is 'friendship and understanding among the childern of the world'. Some 100 paintings drawn by Iranian and Japanese childern depicting natural scenary and cultural issues would be put on display at the exhibition.

The exhibition will be cosponsored by Nagoya Municipality of Japan and Bahman Cultural Center of Iran.



University Students: German Court's Scenario Pre-Meditated

TEHRAN — The statement of German court accusing Iran of implicating in assassination of four Iranian dissidents at Mykonos restaurant in 1992 faced angry reaction of Iranian university students.

The students at the universities termed the court's proceedings a pre-meditated scenario designed by direct involvement of the U.S. and the Zionist regime.

A student Mehdi Soltani said the U.S. and the Zionist regime had attempted to heal their wounds suffered in their confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran through the Mykonos court but to no avail.

Rahman Housseini, a law student at Tehran University said the proceedings of the German court was a political one rather than judicial.

He said the EU's move to withdraw its ambassadors from Iran would not serve their interests in Iran.

Another student, Mohammad Reza Khoshnevis said those who appeared before the court as witnesses were terrorists and criminals and how the German court could document on their allegations.

Palestinian Shoots Two Israeli Soldiers at Border

ALLENBY BRIDGE, West Bank — A Palestinian woman returning from Jordan shot and wounded an Israeli border guard and a soldier at the border on Sunday, Israeli police said.

The woman had cleared Jordanian security at the Allenby Bridge crossing between Jordan and the West Bank when she drew a gun and shot the two Israelis, lightly wounding them, a police spokeswoman said.

A senior Jordanian official in Amman told AFP that the 26-year-old woman was a Palestinian from the self-rule town of Qalqiliya in the northern West Bank.

The woman fired one shot, injuring the Israeli guard, according to Jordanian soldiers at the scene, the official said.

Israel controls the border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan. (AFP)

Lebanese-Palestinian Int'l Gathering in Mecca Condemns Berlin Court Verdict

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Participants at the Lebanese-Palestinian International Gathering in Mecca on Saturday night condemned the Berlin court's insult to Islamic sanctities and described the verdict as a plot against the world of Islam.

A resolution released at the end of the gathering stressed that concurrence of the Mykonos court verdict with the scandalous defeat of the Middle East peace process indicates that the imperialist stooges spearheaded by the U.S. have brewed fresh conspiracies against Muslims.

The resolution further stressed all-out support for the Islamic Revolution in Iran and called on the Bonn government to show *well-studied reaction to the* provocation launched by the surrogates of Zionists who grapple to wreck Bonn's relations with the world of Islam.

Ulama and thinkers from Lebanon, Pakistan, India, Bosnia-Herzegovina, England, Germany, the United States, and Italy *stressed that* Hajj *is an enormous* exhilarating gathering of Muslim masses who should proclaim disavowal from polytheists headed by the United States and the Zionist regime.

The resolution scathed the U.S. flagrant support for the Zionist regime and called on Muslims to voice all-out support for the Muslim Palestinian people, also underscoring the necessity for efforts to solidify the Muslim ranks across the world.

Outgoing Indian Ambassador Bids Farewell to Velayati

TEHRAN — The outgoing Indian Ambassador to Tehran Sidharth Singh met with Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati here Sunday where he underlined the importance of tripartite relations among Iran, India and Russia for maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean.

In the meeting, the ambassador expressed his country's readiness to launching the pipeline project with Iran.

He also praised Iran for its great achievements in various fields and underlined the necessity of expanding bilateral relations.

Velayati for his part, *expressed happiness over the* expansion of bilateral relations and emphasized the potentialities of the both countries in different areas. Velayati also called for exploration of new areas of cooperation between the two countries in the Indian Ocean littoral states.

Velayati also called for continuation of mutual cooperation in international organizations including the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Saudis Prevent Setting Up of Iranian Medical Center in Mena, Arafat

MECCA — Saudi Arabia has prevented the equipping and operation of the Iranian medical care center in Mena and Arafat. Dr. Shahabeddin Sadr, head of the medical team of the Iranian Hajj pilgrims, in an interview with IRNA here Saturday night said, "the action of the Saudi authorities is against the norms and the previous written agreements reached between the medical authorities of the two sides."

He added that the members of the Iranian medical team were engaged in establishing a field hospital in Arafat and Mena as in the previous years to offer medical services to the Iranian pilgrims when the Saudi authorities halted the work in progress without stating any valid reasons for their action.

The chief of the Iranian medical team added that the Saudi authorities in reply to follow-ups from the Iranian side stated that they had been ordered to prevent the establishment of field hospitals in Arafat and Mena. The Saudis claimed that they themselves would provide such services without any regard to the consequencs of their action said Dr. Sadr, adding that the primary investigations show that the Saudi facilities in no way meet the requirements and are not acceptable. He emphasized the need for establishing the field hospatal in Arafat and Mena to meet the needs of Iranian pilgrims. Dr. Sadr said that the Iranian medical team is doing its best to resolve the problem and is now engaged in negotiation with the Saudi authorities in order to make them understand the urgency of the problem. (IRNA)

WEATHER

The Islamic Republic of Iran Meteorological Organization announced today's weather as follows:

Forecast for Tehran: Max. temp. 18°C, Min. temp. 8°C

Clear to partly cloudy

Warmest Point:
Jask 29°C

Coldest Point:
Khalkhal -8°C

Some cities of the world

Cities	Max. °C	Cities	Max. °C
Riyadh	27	Vienna	4
Istanbul	5	Moscow	—
Rome	15	Madrid	21
Athens	—	Abu Dhabi	25
London	15	Karachi	29
Paris	11	New Delhi	34
Frankfurt	—	Kuwait	25

Women's Association Condemns Berlin Court's Allegations

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Women Association of Iran in a statement released here Saturday condemned the German court verdict implicating Iran in killing of four Kurdish nationals in Berlin.

According to IRNA, the statement said that today, by raising unfounded accusations and based on testimony by those whose hands are stained with the blood of Muslim people of Iran, the court has repeated the same mistake that others had made in the past.

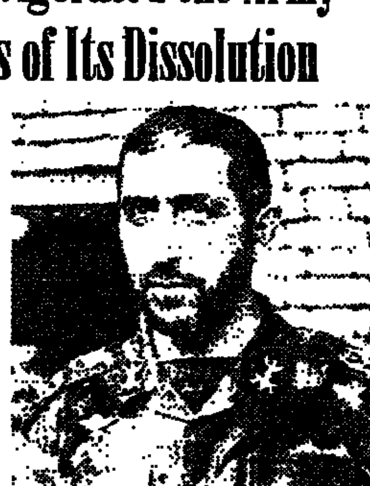
Such adventurism will result in nothing but disgrace for arrogant powers and will consolidate the steadfastness of the Iranain people, all Muslim nations and other freedom loving people of the world.

ARMY COMMANDER:

Imam Khomeini Reinvigorated the Army Amid Enemy Rumors of Its Dissolution

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Commander of the Ground Forces, Brigadier General Ahmad Dadbin, said the late Imam Khomeini instilled fresh life into the vein of the army and restored its majesty amid the rumors spread by anti-revolutionaries who inculcated the idea that the army should be dissolved. Dadbin made the statement on the occasion of the approach of the Day of Army 18 April.



The commander of the ground forces said the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly defended the sanctities of the Islamic Revolution and made sacrifices in the course of regaining the strategic areas occupied by the invading Iraqi forces.

The brigadier general added that the army played a great role in crushing the counter-revolutionary groups, also serving in reconstruction efforts and development plans in the country in post-war period.

He said the post-revolution army endeavored to become self-sufficient in armaments and experts, achieving this goal to a great extent and curtailing the hands of foreign military advisors.

Dadbin said thanks to the guidelines of the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, today the army *has been able to upgrade its* combat capability and is prepared to defend the territorial integrity of the country and the Islamic Revolution most efficiently.

Demonstrations Staged Nationwide Against German Court Accusations

TEHRAN — The Iranian people throughout the country staged massive demonstrations against a German court ruling accusing Iran of involvement in the assassination of four exiled Kurds in Berlin in 1992.

In Shiraz, Fars Province, people *from various* walks of life took to the streets, chanting slogans.

A university professors and students in the holy city of Mashhad issued a statement today, condemning the politically- motivated ruling of the German court.

People in Tabriz, capital of East Azarbaijan, by staging demonstrations today condemned the insult of the German court to the world of Islam.

Similar protest rallies were held in Isfahan, Qom, Ilam, Kermanshah, Bushehr, Yasuj, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari Province, Mahabad, Zahedan, Sanandaj, Semnan, Gorgan, Qazvin, Ardebil and West Azarbaijan Province in which participants condemned the biased action of the German court in insulting the sanctities of the world of Islam. *(IRNA)*

Germans Responsible for Halabja Disaster Should Be Tried: MPs

TEHRAN — Fifteen Kurdish Majlis Deputies in a letter to President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani Sunday called for reconsidering Tehran-Bonn relations following the Thursday verdict of a Berlin court over killing of four Kurdish dissidents in a Berlin restaurant in 1992.

The Kurdish deputies called on the Iranian government and the judiciary to take firm actions against those who provided the toxic chemical weapons to the Baghdad regime which were used in many occasions and places including Halabja.

More than 5,000 defenseless people were killed in the chemical bombardment of the Kurdish-populated regions of Halabja on March 17, 1988, by the Iraqi regime.

Meanwhile, a number of the bereaved families of the victims of the Iraqi imposed war who attended the rally in front of the German embassy earlier today said they have filed law suits against German government.

They called on the Iranian judicial officials to form a special tribunal to prosecute terrorists residing in Germany and those who supplied the Baghdad regime with chemical weapons.

Thousands of Iranian military men and civilians were injured or martyred as a result of deployment of chemical weapons by the Iraqi regime during the 1980-88 imposed war.

Activities of Iranian Rural Women Lauded

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Malaysian Minister of National Unity and Social Development, Ms. Paduka Zalelha Ismail, appreciated the active presence of Iranian rural women in society.

According to IRNA, she made the remark after inspecting a rural welfare center near Karaj, Tehran Province, on Saturday along with other lady delegates from the Asia-Pacific region.

The visiting Malaysian minister added that she was highly impressed by the contribution of Iranian women to construction and productive activities.

The lady delegates are currently in Iran for the Second International conference of the first ladies of the Asia-Pacific countries, which opened in Tehran last Thursday.

Iran-Russia Will Expand Economic, Trade Relations

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Iran's Commerce Minister, Yahya Al-e Es'haq, and the Russian Minister of Trade and External Economic Relations, Mr. Fradkov, surveyed the grounds for expansion of trade cooperation between the two countries.

Al-e Es'haq alluded to Irano-Russian good relations and stressed signing of a commerce agreement in tune with the present conditions.

He expressed hope that with the creation of a trade center in Russia, holding of better exhibitions and commissioning of joint shipping lines, mutual relations will ever more solidify.

Al-e Es'haq invited the Russian trade minister to visit Iran, especially during the Tehran International Trade Fair.



Fradkov alluded to the hundred percent increase in the volume of exchange between the two countries and termed as suitable the revival of the joint commission for promotion of mutual relations.

He voiced his country's readiness for reconstruction of Russian plans in Iran.

Lithuania Keen to Cooperate With Iran in Agriculture

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Lithuania's Minister of Agriculture Vytautas Knashys told Iranian Ambassador to Warsaw Mohammad Taheri Saturday that his government looked foward to benefiting from Iran's experience in the area of agricultural production.

He said in light of the diversity of the climate in Iran, the country had achieved a significant progress in the area of agriculture, IRNA reported.

He said his government would also welcome arrangements to supply Iran with meat and dairy products. He added that because of the omission of tariff charges between Lithuania and the countries of the Baltic region, Iran could send her exports to the said countries via Lithuanian soil. The offer was welcomed by the Iranian ambassador.

It was mutually agreed in the meeting that both countries would make arrangements for a visit to Tehran by Lithuanian experts for a feasibility study of future cooperation of the two countries in those areas.

Iran Produces 50 Million Doses of Polio Vaccine a Year

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Some 50 million doses of polio vaccine are produced in the country annually, it was announced in Arak on Sunday.

Ali Akbar Mohammadi, Head of Razi Research Institute, told IRNA in Arak Sunday that the production has increased by five fold compared to four years ago.

Since Iran is self-sufficient in pilio vaccine production, some eight million doses are exported anually, he said.

Mohammadi concluded that only 10 centers, including Iran, are authorized to produce polio vaccine throughout the world.

Berlin Ruling Will Have No Impact on Tehran-Vienna Economic Ties

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The Austrian Economic Chamber, in a statement issued in Vienna Saturday, announced that the recent developments resultuing from the verdict of Berlin court will have no impact on growing Tehran-Vienna economic relations.

The statement added that neither Austria nor Iran is willing to lower the level of Iran-Austria economic relations, IRNA reported.

The chamber said that it seemed unlikely that the European Union would be willing to impose economic sanction on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran is considered a major economic partner of Austria, it underlined.

Meanwhile, the Austrian Foreign Minister, Wolfgang Schussel, has announced his objection to imposition of any economic sanction on the Islamic Republic.

He has stressed that if the issue is to come up at the European Union meeting on April 29, he will oppose it.

New Zealand Exporters Concerned About Iran Import Ban

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - New Zealand authorities said on Sunday they were concerned at reports that Iran had banned imports of New Zealand meat, butter and wool, and were awaiting word on how long the ban would remain in force.

They said Iran was a relatively small market for the country's primary exports, but was nonetheless valuable, a Reuter dispatch reported.

Islamic Republic News Agency, IRNA, reported on Saturday that deals for buying New Zealand meat, butter and wool had been suspended and Iran was seeking other suppliers.

It said the ban was a response to New Zealand joining other Western countries in recalling their envoys to Tehran, following a German court ruling that Iran ordered the 1992 murders of four Kurdish dissidents in Berlin.

Radio New Zealand reported that at this stage New Zealand appeared to have been the only country singled out for retailiation.

A spokesperson for International Trade Minister Lockwood Smith said New Zealand had not yet been told officially of the suspension of imports, and would seek more information.

Wools of New Zealand's Group Manager of Corporate Relations, Roger Buchanan, told Reuters the fact that New Zealand had not been officially notified of the import ban made it difficult to speculate how long it would last and what the implications were.

He said wool exports to Iran varied a good deal.

Buchanan said New Zealand had exported around three to four thousand tons of wool annually to Iran over the last two or three years, worth around $15-20 million a year.

New Zealand Dairy Board Spokesman Neville Martin said while the Iranian trade ban was regrettable, the level of business with Iran at present was light.

Martin said Iran bought large supplies of butter last year but business this year was worth only around $6.9 million.

The Chief Executive of the New Zealand Meat Producers Board, Neil Taylor, said sheep meat exports to Iran varied from zero to 20,000 tons a year.

Given that we export 370,000 tons (of sheep meat world-wide) a year, it's a relatively small market these days compared to what it used to be, but it's still quite an important market in terms of the mix of markets for different products.

Taylor said New Zealand was a large exporter to the Middle East of meat slaughtered to Islamic religious requirements, and although the Iranian component of that market had lessened in recent years, it could well pick up again in the future.

When we do trade there it's about three to five percent of our exports in terms of earnings, but it's a market that is different, and therefore it is of value. We would rather the opportunity to sell there was not closed off.

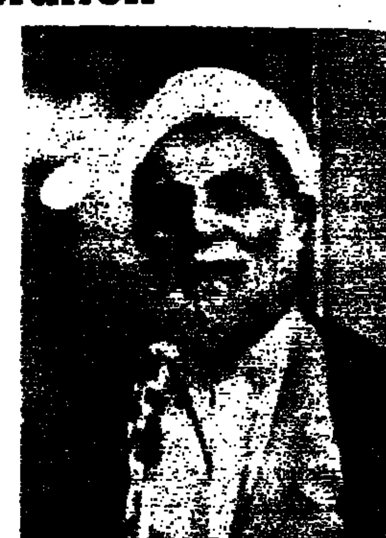
Iran, Russia to Expand Oil, Gas Cooperation

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The visiting Iranian Majlis Speaker Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri said in Saint Petersburg Sunday that based on talks held and agreements reached between Iran and Russia, the two countries will increase joint investment in oil and gas industries.

Hojatoleslam Nateq Nouri added in an exclusive interview with Itar-Tass that in his talks in Moscow with President Boris Yeltsin and other Russian officials, it was agreed that the two countries take further measures to expand bilatral cooperation including development of the fourth phase of the southern Pars gas field.

He added that Iran favors participation of Russia in the Iran-France joint consortium in expanding the southern Pars gas field and prefers Russia to other countries in this regard.



Nateq Nouri added that at present experts of the two countries are formulating policies for bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The Majlis speaker arrived in Saint Petersburg Sunday heading a ranking political, economic and parliamentary delegation.

Russia, World Bank to Change Cooperation Strategy

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Russia and the World Bank will change the strategy of their cooperation, proceeding from loans meant to prop up the government's budget to investment in concrete projects, a top cabinet official said Saturday.

First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais also said the International Development Bank will provide Russia with an additional $500 million loan this year for the restructuring of its coal industry.

Chubais spoke after meeting with the visiting World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, the Interfax news agency reported.

The sides agreed that the World Bank will gradually increase its loans from $500 to 800 million in 1996 to as much as $3 billion annually, according to Chubais.

At the same time, he said, Russia will strive to end borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Chubais said the current IMF-Russia loan deal of $10 billion, spread over three years, is likely to be the last.

Wolfensohn on Friday met with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Economics Minister Yakov Urinson.

The World Bank is financing various programs in the framework of Russian economic reforms, including those focusing on reforms in the country's social and financial sectors.

Russian news agencies have quoted well-informed officials as saying the bank might provide new credits for the planned housing and public utilities reform.

Goods Worth Rls.5.79bn Exported From Qazvin

Tehrcn Times Service

TEHRAN - Agricultural products, worth Rls.5.79 billion, were exported from Qazvin during the Iranian month of Esfand (February 21-March 20, 1997), according to the director of provincial standard and industrial research institute.

Farajollah Hajati added that the products, estimated to weigh 4,324 tons, were exported to European countries, Canada, Central Asian countries and Russia.

Persian Gulf States to Learn From Asian Industrial Experience

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Hundreds of officials and businessmen from six Persian Gulf Arab states will gather in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) next month to discuss expanding their non-oil industries and how to benefit from Asian experience in this field, officials said on Sunday in Abu Dhabi.

The May 13-14 conference of industrialists in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) will include several papers on industrial development, including one on the experience of Malaysia and Indonesia, they said, as quoted by AFP.

"The industrial experience of Southeast Asian countries is admired by all. We need to learn from them in the development of our industrial sector," said an official at the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

More than 500 ministers, officials and businessmen from the 16-year-old economic, political and defense alliance will attend the Abu Dhabi conference, entitled "The PGCC Industrial Infrastructure ... Its Situation and Challenges."

Organizers said the conference would focus on new investments in the industrial sector and drawing up fresh industrialization strategies.

PGCC states— Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the UAE— have pumped more than 50 billion dollars into building nearly 10,000 manufacturing units as part of an industrialization drive to lessen reliance on oil.

But most of their industries have remained confined to light products as they lack technology for heavy industries.

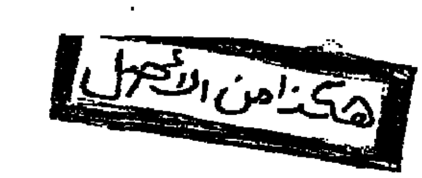
Despite a sharp growth in industrial exports, their value of around 15 billion dollars a year remains a fraction of their oil exports of more than 70 billion dollars. The share of the non-oil industries also accounted for only nine percent of the gross domestic product compared with 35 percent for oil.

PGCC states, which control around 45 percent of the world's oil resources, are among the biggest consumer markets, with annual imports exceeding 50 billion dollars.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE RATES

The following table shows the foreign exchange rates in rials as released by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Sunday, April 13, 1997.

COUNTRY	UNIT	Floating Rates		Export Rates	
		BUY	SELL	BUY	SELL
Australia	dollar	1,372	1,380	2,356	2,368
Austria	schilling	144	145	247	248
Belgium	(100) francs	4,922	4,950	8,450	8,492
Canada	dollar	1,250	1,258	2,147	2,157
Denmark	krone	266	268	458	460
France	franc	301	303	517	520
Germany	mark	1,014	1,020	1,741	1,750
Holland	guilder	901	906	1,547	1,555
Italy	(100) liras	103	104	176	177
Japan	(100) yen	1,387	1,395	2,381	2,393
Sweden	krone	226	228	389	391
UAE	dirham	476	479	818	820
UK	pound	2,838	2,855	4,873	4,897
U.S.	dollar	1,750	1,755	3,000	3,015



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SPORTS SUMMARY

Tehran Times Service

GOLF

Tiger Grabs Record Masters Lead

AUGUSTA: Tiger Woods matched the 54-hole course record here, firing a seven-under par 65 to take an unprecedented nine-stroke lead into the final round of the 61st masters championship.
Woods stood at 15-under par 201 at Augusta national golf club, equal to the three-round mark set by American Ray Floyd in 1976 and well within reach of the 72-hole mark of 271 set by Floyd in 1976 and Jack Nicklaus in 1965.
Italy's Costantino Rocca was second at six-under par 210 with American Paul Stankowski third at 211.

FOOTBALL

United Win as Arsenal Keep Up Pressure

LONDON: An Andy Cole-inspired Manchester United bounced back from their midweek defeat to Borussia Dortmund by winning 3-2 at Blackburn to maintain their three-point lead at the top of the premiership.
Second-placed Arsenal kept up the pressure with a 2-0 victory over Leicester at Highbury to move three ahead of Liverpool, who were due to visit relegation-haunted Sunderland on Sunday.
At the other end of the table 10-man Southampton earned an important 2-0 win over West Ham, while Everton and Derby all but assured themselves of premiership football next season with home wins.

Bayern Pull Clear as Dortmund Crash

BONN: Bayern Munich took a potentially decisive step towards the German title when they beat FC Cologne 3-2 as injury-hit Borussia Dortmund crashed to defeat by the same score at Duisburg.
Bayern held off a late Cologne charge after scoring three times in 17 minutes through Ruggiero Rizzitelli (twice) and Jurgen Klinsmann in the Olympic Stadium to move five points clear of Bayer Leverkusen, who beat Karlsruhe 3-1 on Friday.
Stuttgart thrashed visiting Hansa Rostock 5-1 to go third, a point behind Leverkusen and ahead of Dortmund on goal difference.

Falkirk Hold Celtic to Cup Semifinal Draw

GLASGOW: Kevin James hit a late equalizer to earn first division Falkirk a 1-1 draw with Scottish giants Celtic in their Scottish cup semifinal at Ibrox.
Tommy Johnson had marked his full Celtic debut with a 65th minute goal but then 6ft 7in defender James, thrown forward in an effort to save the tie, came to the rescue by heading in nine minutes from time.
Now the sides must meet again back at Ibrox on Wednesday, April 23 to earn the right to go through to the May 24 final against either Kilmarnock or Dundee United who play on Monday.

FORMULA ONE

Villeneuve on Pole

BUENOS AIRES: Favorite Jacques Villeneuve is poised to stamp his superiority on the Formula One title chase after blitzing to pole position for the Argentinian Grand Prix on Saturday.
The Canadian claimed his fourth successive pole stretching back to last season's finale in Japan with another awesome qualifying display for Sunday's race in the Renault-powered Williams.
Villeneuve's domination brought him a massive eight-tenths of a second advantage over German teammate Heinz-Harald Frentzen as the new pairing claimed both places on the front row for the second time this season.

TENNIS

Radulescu and Tillstrom Reach Final

MADRAS: Alex Radulescu, the top remaining seed in the Indian Open, sailed into the final here with a victory over Frenchman Gerard Solves in straight sets.
The 23-year-old German trounced Solves 6-3, 6-2 in 53 minutes in the semifinal, a day after he defeated Wimbledon finalist Malivai Washington in the 430,000-dollar tournament.
In the other semifinal, Mikael Tillstrom of Sweden beat Romanian Andrei Pavel 6-3, 6-3 to qualify for his first ATP final.

Pierce and Davenport Book Final Date

AMELIA ISLAND: Lindsay Davenport set up a final showdown with Mary Pierce at the WTA event as they saw off Amanda Coetzer and Iva Majoli in their respective semifinals.
Canadian-born Pierce, seeded 11 here and a finalist a year ago, had to scrap for her three set win over eighth-seeded Croatian Iva Majoli, before progressing 2-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) having saved a match point in the final set of the two-and-a-half hour clash.
Sixth seed Davenport of the U.S., had less trouble as she ousted South Africa's 12th seed Coetzer 7-5, 6-2.

Strasbourg Win French League Cup on Penalties

PARIS — Strasbourg won their first major domestic title in 18 years when they beat Bordeaux 6-5 in a penalty shoot-out to lift the French League Cup on Saturday.

The win, snatched thanks to Stephane Collet after more than two hours of a final which stood goalless after extra time, earned Strasbourg a berth in the UEFA Cup next season.

The result was tough on Bordeaux goalkeeper Gilles Bodart, who saved his side three times with brilliant parries during the shoot-out only to have to concede defeat.

Strasbourg looked doomed when skipper Gerald Baticle missed his team's second penalty but Stephane Grenet also failed to convert a shot which would have given Bordeaux victory.

Bordeaux then missed twice through Cyril Demoraud and Bernard Lambourde. But each time Bodart made superb saves and earned his team a reprieve.

The Belgian goalkeeper has become a shoot-out specialist: Bordeaux twice qualified on penalties during the competition.

His father was also famous for stopping 18 consecutive penalties in the Belgian first division.

But there was nothing Bodart, who hurt a shoulder on his final save, could do against Collet, the ninth Strasbourg player to try his luck.

Strasbourg won the first league cup, which was held in 1963 only to be abandoned the following season. The competition was launched again three years ago, with Paris St. Germain and Metz winning once each. (Reuter)



PARIS, France (April 12): The Strasbourg soccer team pose for photographers with the French League Cup which they won in a penalty shoot-out beating Bordeaux 6-5 on panalties after extra time at the Parc des Princes in Paris. (AFP PHOTO)

De la Hoya Claims WBC Welterweight Title

LAS VEGAS, Nevada — Oscar de la Hoya lifted the World Boxing Council welterweight title here Saturday with a unanimous decision over fellow American Pernell Whitaker.

The judges gave the fight to De la Hoya 115-111, 116-110 and 116-110, but many observers at the Thomas and Mack Center thought the bout was much closer.

Even De la Hoya, who took his record to 24-0 with 20 knockouts, said he was frustrated by his failure to dominate.

"I could have done much better," De la Hoya said, welcoming Whitaker's call for a rematch.

"I thought he would be faster and stronger. Now that I know his style, I'll go back to the gym and work and train and get it done.

I'll feel unfulfilled until I know that I can dominate his style of fight."

Whitaker suffered the second defeat of his career, falling to 40-2-1 with 17 knockouts.

"I was robbed again," Whitaker said. "I should have gotten 10 out of 12 rounds. It was a clear victory. I want a rematch."

De la Hoya survived a flash knockdown in the ninth, while Whitaker lost a point in the third for an accidental head butt that cut De la Hoya under the right eye.

Whitaker's southpaw style appeared to bother De la Hoya, who strayed from his usual aggressive style. At times, the 24-year-old "Golden Boy" seemed hesitant to chase the 33-year-old veteran.

Whitaker also fought a tactical fight, and before the ninth round his corner was urging him to throw more punches or risk losing the fight. (AFP)

Valencia Dent Bilbao's UEFA Hopes

MADRID — Valencia severely dented Athletic Bilbao's UEFA Cup hopes on Saturday when they hammered the Basque outfit 5-2 to leave Luis Fernandez's men in sixth spot, seven points behind reigning champions Atletico Madrid.

Jorge Valdano's Valencia, who have struggled to make any impression on the title race this season, leapfrogged Santander to go into tenth spot with a brace of penalties from Daniel Ortega and a double from Leandro.

Gabriel Moya hit the other goal for the hosts, who roared into a 5-0 lead inside 34 minutes. Ismael Urzaiz scored either side of half time for the shell-shocked visitors.

UEFA Cup semifinalists Tenerife stayed a point clear of Valencia as they won 2-1 at home to Deportivo la Coruna, who stay fourth behind Betis.

Elsewhere Saturday, Sevilla and Extremadura fought out a goalless draw.

Runaway leaders Real Madrid face second-from-bottom Logrones on Sunday, while second-placed Barcelona visit Atletico Madrid.

Third-placed Betis travel to San Sebastian to face Real Sociedad. (AFP)

Tergat Scores Fourth Consecutive Victory in Italian Half-Marathon

MILAN, Italy — World cross-country champion Paul Tergat led a Kenyan podium sweep at the Stramilano half-marathon Saturday, his fourth consecutive victory and the ninth straight by a Kenyan in the Italian road race.

Tergat equaled the Stramilano record for consecutive victories set by countryman Moses Tanui but failed to better Tanui's world best for the distance, completing 21.097 kilometers (13.1 miles) in 1 hour and 23 seconds.

Tanui set the world half-marathon standard of 59:47 in the 1993 Stramilano.

Tergat, who won his third consecutive world cross-country title in Turin last month, dominated as expected but was hampered by a strong wind in his attempt to set the record.

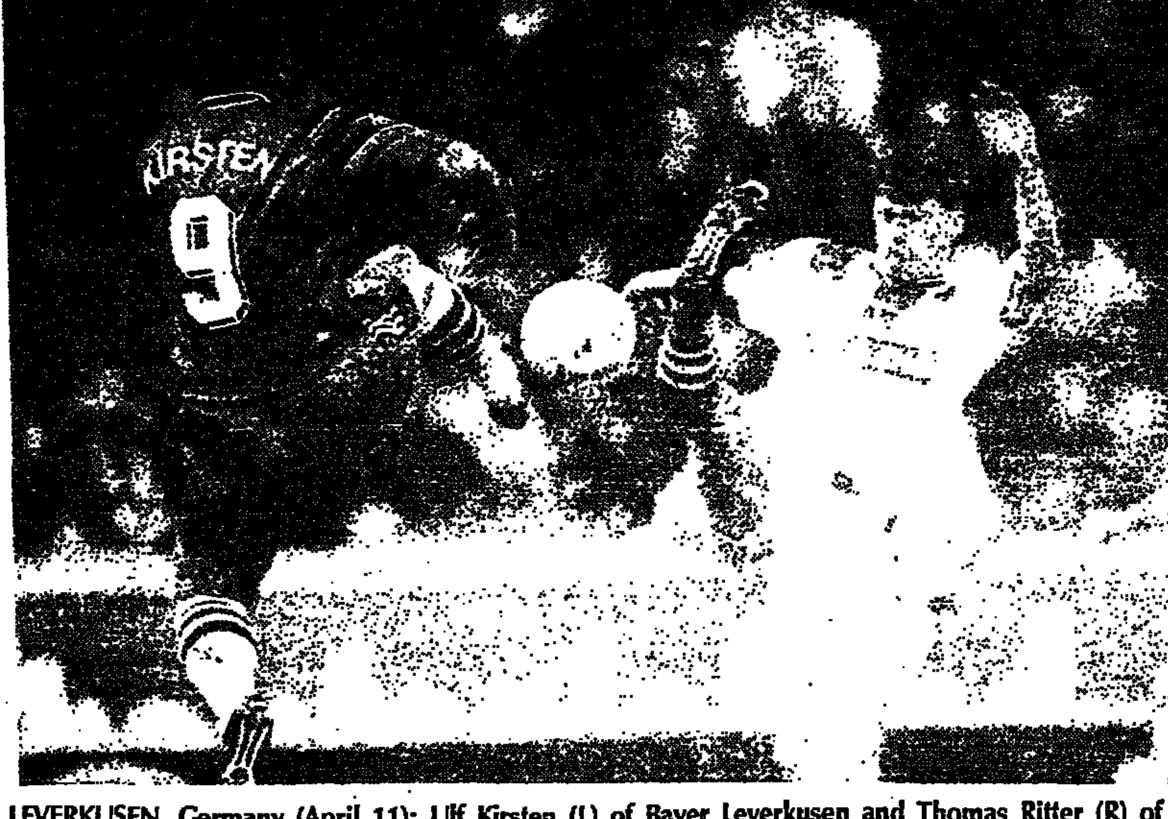
The 27-year-old Kenyan took command 5 kilometers from the finish and beat young teammate Kenneth Cheriyuot by 22 seconds in front of Milan's Gothic Cathedral.

Another Kenyan, Jonah Koech, was third on the asphalted downtown streets of Milan.

Brazilian Ronaldo da Costa finished fourth, nearly three minutes behind the winner.

Australian Darren Wilson, who ran the fastest half-marathon this year in Tokyo, was a distant 12th.

Tergat said he will now concentrate on the 10,000 meters at the world championships in August in Athens, Greece. (AP)



LEVERKUSEN, Germany (April 11): Ulf Kirsten (L) of Bayer Leverkusen and Thomas Ritter (R) of Karlsruhe in a mid-air clash during their German Bundesliga match. Bayer Leverkusen defeated Karlsruhe 3-1. (AFP PHOTO)

Indian Troops Placed on High Alert on Kashmir Border

JAMMU, India — Indian troops were placed on high alert along the disputed Kashmir frontier as they traded fire with Pakistani forces for the fourth successive day Sunday, officials said.

The alert status meant additional troops would be deployed and patrols along the frontier intensified, they added.

One official earlier said troops had been placed on their highest possible level of alert but others later said this was not the case.

The increased tensions came a day after the shooting killed at least two Indians, including a child, and injured eight others Saturday. Unconfirmed reports put the toll at four.

It also comes amid renewed dialogue between bitter rivals India and Pakistan, which culminated in a meeting between foreign ministers of the two countries in New Delhi Wednesday.

Officials Sunday claimed Pakistani troops continued to take the offensive and that Indian forces were responding.

Pakistani troops "using heavy artillery stepped up attacks on Indian villages near the Kargil sector," one official said.

He added Pakistani soldiers were attacking villages near Kanachak and Akhnoor, close to Jammu, the winter capital of the Indian state of Kashmir.

"We have retaliated. No one was injured (Sunday)," he said.

Jammu and Kashmir State Home Minister Ali Mohammad Sagar said senior army officers had rushed to the border and a delegation led by a senior minister would visit the area to persuade villagers not to leave.

"Pakistani shelling in the area for the last four days has created a scare," Sagar said.

Defence Spokesman S. Prosbotam said 4,000 villagers in Acchanmorh, Poyan, Bali Bagh and Sahali Kucha had fled after coming under fire.

"The Pakistan firing has caused extensive damage to civilian property and several houses have been damaged in the continuing shelling," he said.

"The firing has been going on since April 9 and they are deliberately targetting the civilian population."

Indian and Pakistani troops regularly exchange gunfire along the winding Kashmir frontier, with an average 2,000 "skirmishes" every year, according to Indian Army figures. But officials said mortars and heavy guns had not been used for a long time.

(AFP)

Iran Reciprocates Govts' Recalling Their Ambassadors

TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran would reciprocate the decision of the governments to recall their ambassadors from Tehran, said an informed source in the Iranian Foreign Ministry on Saturday.

The Netherlands that is now rotary head of the European Union said Saturday that EU members had recalled their ambassadors from Tehran.

Italy and Greece, both EU members, said Saturday that their ambassadors are still in Tehran.

(IRNA)

Iraq Launches Diplomatic Offensive Against U.S.

BAGHDAD — Iraq has decided to launch a diplomatic offensive against the United States to prevent it from forcing a UN condemnation of an Iraqi flight that took Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia this week.

A senior Iraqi official said Sunday that Baghdad would make concerted efforts "through diplomatic channels and on all levels to explain that it has not violated UN resolutions."

The UN Security Council postponed consultations until Monday after failing to agree on how to respond to the Iraqi Airways flight which carried 104 pilgrims Wednesday to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

The United States charges that this is violation of the UN air embargo placed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"The American position is illegal and the pressure exerted by the United States to force a condemnation (of Iraq) is unacceptable," the Revolutionary Command Council said in a statement after a meeting chaired Saturday by President Saddam Hussein.

The council warned that Baghdad would "refuse any new interpretation of the (UN) resolutions and reserved the right to continue to use its planes."

It "paid tribute to the understanding attitude of some members of the Security Council," the statement added.

The Security Council was split over the legality of the flight, which Iraq argued was humanitarian and therefore allowed under the ambiguously-worded resolution 670.

The government newspaper *Al-Jomhuriya* said: "The debates over the humanitarian flight showed the United States can no longer manipulate the Security Council's positions.

"Iraq's position is getting stronger and stronger" within the international community, it said.

(AFP)

20,000 Palestinians Allowed Back Into Israel

GAZA CITY — Israel allowed 20,000 Palestinian workers back into the Jewish state on Sunday after easing a three-week security closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

However, thousands failed to take up the offer because they were worried about running into problems with Israelis, Palestinian officials said.

Palestinians aged more than 35, married and granted authorization from Israel's Internal Security Agency Shin Beth were allowed into Israel from dawn, military sources said.

Israel sealed off the Palestinian territories on March 21 after a bombing in Tel Aviv that killed three Jewish women.

The security clampdown threw 50,000 Palestinians with work permits for Israel out of their jobs.

Said Mudallel, director general of labor with the Palestinian authority, said only 5,000 of the 9,000 Gazans allowed back into Israel turned up at crossing points on Sunday morning.

"Some were reluctant to enter Israel in case they faced problems there, especially with settlers," he told AFP.

"If the first day goes by without any problems, they might go back to work on Monday," he added. He was not able to say how many Palestinians from the West Bank had gone back to work.

(AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

IRAN...

to fail and the European countries which take care of their national interests will never accept other country's bullying.

Similar rallies were also held in different cities across the country.

Issuing a 12-point resolution the demonstrators concluded the rally.

The resolution condemned the verdict of the Mykonos court saying that the issue stems from the smear propaganda campaign orchestrated by the Zionist and arrogant powers.

It expressed Iranian nation's hatred of the Zionist propaganda plots, saying that the German court tried to satisfy the U.S. administration and the Zionist circles. "The Iranian nation herein condemns the insult of the German judiciary against Iranian officials and the Islamic system of Iran and its values which are not justifiable and tolerable.

The German government is responsible and should accept all the political repercussions of its biased move. Yet, we consider the great Satan as our main enemy.

Iran itself is the chief victim of terrorism losing its best sons in terrorist attacks, launched by the elements of the arrogant powers, the resolution said. Iran has always condemned all kinds of terrorists acts and it is ready to practically confront terrorism. The baseless charges levelled against Iran on supporting terrorism is rejected, it added. The demonstrators renewed their allegiance to the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

BOMB...

The explosive device, planted in a motorcycle parked near the gates of Khan's residence, was detonated as relatives and party colleagues arrived to mourn his death.

Bomb disposal experts said the bomb carrying two kilograms of explosive was detonated with a timer.

Khan, a member of the Central Executive Committee of MQM-Haqiqi, was shot dead Saturday by unidentified assailants who barged into his home in the city's eastern Landhi district. The gunmen escaped.

Residents in the area said the atmosphere was tense Sunday morning following the explosion, with sporadic shooting in the air.

Hundreds of party leaders and emotionally charged activists had gathered in Landhi to attend the funeral prayers for Khan and his cousin, also a member of MQM-Haqiqi.

Officials said paramilitary rangers and armed police had intensified their patrols in armored vehicles to prevent any further incident.

(AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

COALITION...

Masood, the commander of the former government forces with President Burhanudin Rabbani by the Taleban last September, has joined forces with Dostam's ethnic Uzbek Army and Khalili's Shiite religious faction.

Said Jaffer Naderi, a Dostam general who commands the Ismaelia minority religious group, hosted the six-hour Saturday night strategy meeting at his northern base in Pule Khomri, officials said.

In addition to the alliance's three main leaders and Naderi, the meeting was also attended by Mohaqqiqi, an important commander of the Shiite party the Hezb-i-Wahdat, they said.

"Results of the meeting were encouraging," an official told AFP adding that some differences were ironed out. He did not elaborate.

Masood was flown back to Taluqan on Sunday in a helicopter. On Saturday Masood and Rabbani had driven to Pule Khomri in a convoy of 20 vehicles and an official stressed "there were no security problems" en route.

Masood had told journalists in Taluqan last week that the northern alliance has been joined by the Mujahedeen of the former provincial council in Jalalabad led by Haji Abdul Qadeer, a former governor of eastern Ningarhar Province.

The northern alliance in coordination with Qadeer has planned a nationwide offensive against the Taleban in the coming year, he said.

(AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

SAUDI...

However, witnesses said the level of security outside the Iranian compound was not out of the ordinary.

Members of the Special Pilgrimage Police Force and Interior Ministry Troops were deployed at the site, but the rank-and-file were armed only with wooden clubs and only the officers carried handguns, the witnesses said.

The head of Iran's 73,000 pilgrims in Mecca, Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, told IRNA that the demonstration would be held "with all its splendor" on Sunday — the sixth day of the lunar month.

However, Reyshahri said the demonstrations could be held outside of Mecca in either Mount Arafat or Mina, nearby stations on the pilgrimage.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

MAJLIS...

He said the EU states decision to summon their ambassadors from Tehran for consultation is a political gesture which Iran would reciprocate.

The government's decision to suspend Iranian contracts with New Zealand as well as a visit to Tehran of an Australian delegation was a timely act, he said, adding that the Islamic Republic of Iran would take into consideration the moves of the EU members and would adopt necessary decisions to deal with them.

He said, "we should remind the European states that gone is the time for imposing unilateral views and expectations on others in international relations and that the European states that have turned into safe havens for terrorists could not claim they observe international law."

He also welcomed suspension of the critical dialogue with the EU and said, "We regard the critical dialogue as useless and we will not hold negotiations with the EU members unless they prove their goodwill."

He said the ruling of the Berlin Court was announced at a time when the Middle East peace process had reached a dead end and the death of the America's seven-year old diplomacy in the Persian Gulf and the hypocrisy of the Zionist regime had become clear to world public opinion.

He said the Mykonos Court has based its judgement on the testimony of witnesses who had escaped from Iran 12 years before the four exiled Kurds were assassinated in 1992.

Meanwhile Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati here Sunday said at a press conference that any country ignoring Iran's Islamic principles and values would face Iran's firm reaction.

Velayati reiterated that Iran's relations with other countries are based on mutual respect. We do not interfere in other countries' internal affairs and expect them not to meddling our internal affairs. He added that the Mykonos Court was a politicized court which issued its biased verdic under the influence of the Zionist regime.

He added that the Berlin court's verdict is a vain attempt to justify the failure of U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Referring to Iran's cordial relations with other countries, Velayati said that Iran would not limit its relations to a particular country, adding that Iran would reciprocate governments who recall their ambassadors from Iran. Referring to the ongoing visit of Majlis Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri to Moscow, Velayati said, the visit points up to Iran's successful regional and international policies. As a great power, Russia will not allow the Zionists to influence its policies, he said adding that Tehran and Moscow are determined to expand their relations in all fields. Moscow has acknowledged that its relations with Tehran is of strategic importance which should be continued.

On recalling Iran's Ambassador to Bonn Hossein Mossavian, Velayati said he was called for consultations.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

NATIONS...

Alims, Islamic thinkers and scholars who had participated in the gathering called on the German government to prove the stability and independence of its judicial system which obviously acted under the influence of Zionist elements.

The Sixth Ahl-ul Bait World Assembly was opened Friday by the Leader's Representative and Head of Iranian Hajj pilgrims, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

VELAYATI...

country.

Hekmatyar for his part condemned the warlike policies of the Taleban in Afghanistan which were, as he said, against the best interests of the people of that country.

The prime minister of Afghanistan said the solution to the internal Afghan problems lies in dialogue between all rival groups and their sincere collaboration for returning peace to that country.

Hekmatyar also condemned the instigations of foreign powers and especially that of the United States and said that foreign powers should evacuate Afghanistan.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

PERES...

discussed the idea with Netanyahu last week. Netanyahu narrowly beat Peres in Israel's national elections last May.

Peres, on a visit to Brazil, told the radio that the two men did not discuss exact details and Netanyahu did not present any official offer.

Peres' leadership of the party is expected to shift at the next Labor leadership convention on June 3, and favorite Ehud Barak, who opposes national unity, is expected to replace him. If brought into the current government, Peres reportedly expects to be in charge of coordinating the peace process and reports suggested he may even enter the government without Labor Party support.

Final status negotiations between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority were to resume on March 17 and be completed within two years but were delayed after Israel began construction last month of a new Jewish settlement on disputed Bait-ul-Moqaddas land.

The Palestinians want part of that area to be included in a future independent state.

The Palestinians broke off security cooperation after the construction began and no high level talks have been held since.

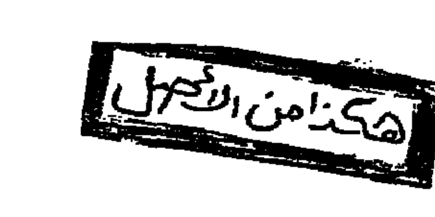
Final status talks are to tackle the conflicts most sensitive issues including the status if Bait-ul-Moqaddas and the future of Jewish settlements.

Senior members of both Netanyahu's government and Peres' Labor Party seemed surprised the two men had discussed the idea.

Communications Minister Limor Livnat told the *Haaretz* newspaper that Netanyahu did not advise her or other minister of his intentions. She said she would not support the idea unless Labor adopted the current government line.

Most Labor Party members are expected to oppose the idea unless Netanyahu softens his hardline policies.

(AP)



Advantages of Hajj IN THE EYES OF IMAM KHOMEINI

Tehran Times Service

It is the duty of all mankind to God to come the House a Pilgrim if he is able to make his way there". (Qoran 3:97)

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) says:

"Allah has made the pilgrimage to His Sacred House, the Qibla obligatory upon you. People flock to it just as animals flock to water. They go there with the smae interest and zeal as the wild pigeons go to the hill to take shelter.

Allah has made this Hajj (Pilgrimage) the sign of their submission to Him which is only due to the Almighty Allah. He has made it the sign of their belief and conviction in Him which is only due to His respect.

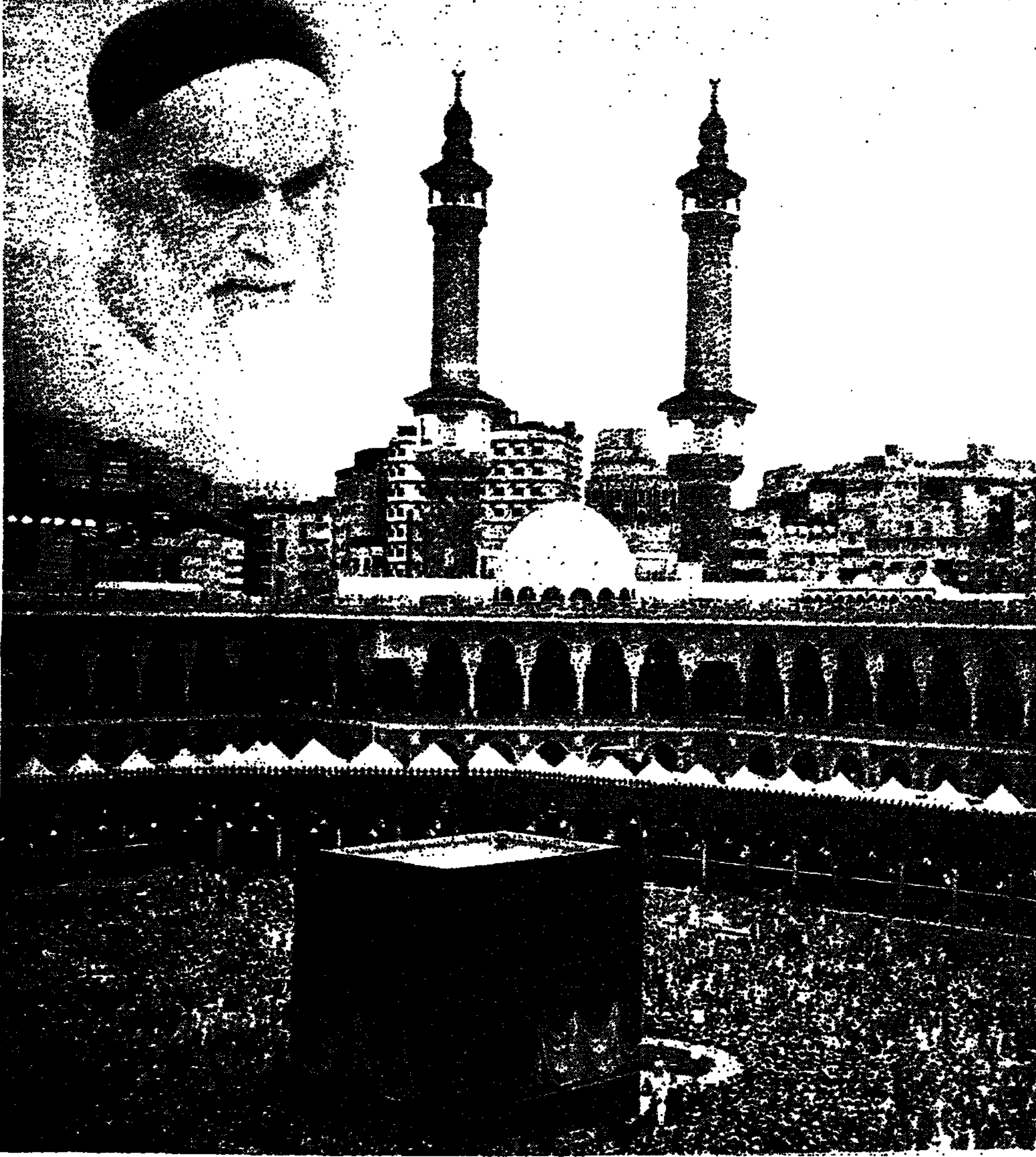
He has selected some people who listen to Him, who obey His invitation, who testify to his word, who stand in the place of His Prophets and who resemble those Angels who make sounds of the Divine Throne (Arash).

In this Divine trade they are securing benefits of performing His worship and benefits of performing His worship and hastening towards the promise place of Pardon and Grace.

Allah has made this House the symbol of Islam, a place where people can find rest, peace and hope. (Nahjul Balagah, Sermon No:3).

According to Islamic teachings, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a Prophet who devoted himself totally (Muslim) to the service of Allah and whose aim was to establish the rule and justice of Allah on the earth.

The Holy Qoran narrates that Ibrahim purified the already existing Ka'aba and raised its foundation in front of the Ka'aba, the standing place of Ibrahim (Magam Ibrahim) is situated. It is the Place which a believer perform Hajj, he become an Ibrahim in so far as his spiritual growth and purity of intention of fulfilling the covenants he made with Allah are concerned.



The Hajj Pilgrimage must have a great impact on the life of the Muslim Ummah. If the pilgrims of the House of Allah always remember the covenants with Allah and do what they as Muslim are supposed to do, only then the Muslim Ummah may come out of its present relative stagnation and decadence more quickly. Certainly, one of the reasons why the Hajj has not so far been effective enough in the awakening process of the Muslim is the unIslamic attitude of those so-called 'Islamic' governments which advocate the false dictum that "Politics has nothing to do with Hajj".

What should be done and where must one take this great sorrow that like the Holy Qoran, Hajj has been made obsolete and to the same degree that this book of life and purification has been hidden in our self made veils, this treasure of the secrets of creation has been conceal under the dust of our deviated thoughts, and its language of compassion, guidance and its life giving Philosophy has been reduced to the language of horror, death and the grave.

I, hereby, wish to recall and highlight, the sermon and saying of our beloved Imam Khomeini (may Allah bless his soul) on the advantages of Hajj. In one of his address to Muslim masses and Iranian pilgrims in 1972 Imam says:

"Among the Divine precepts, the precepts of the Hajj have special significance, perhaps the political and social aspect of pilgrimage predominate over its other aspect and it is necessary that upon the threshold of the establishment of the Islamic republic with glorious revolution of the nation of Iran that this sacred duty be purified of the effect of anyone who rebels against taghut (false god) and returned to the true Islam and be realized with all its meaningful content.

Human Aspect of Hajj

The Baiytul Allah even though It is called House of Allah is really the house of mankind.

The Holy Qoran say "the first house for mankind was certainly that at blessed Makka (Mecca)" (3:96).

Here all human beings, rich and poor, of whatever race, city dweller and country folks are *brothers and equal. "Alike in it are native and the stranger" (22:25).*

Therefore, all material aspects, outer clothing and other signs of material and class distinction are put aside and two plains, white unsewn pieces of cloth, the sign of equality and purity are worn in their places. As one, the Muslims then march towards the nourisher, bearing in mind and soul to keep themselves free from all thoughts that is required of them while performing the Hajj such as *arrogance, lies and indecency,* rivalry in material grandeur and pride.

Its Spiritual Contact

"Insha'llah, Imam says, during the rule of the Islamic Republic this sacred ritual (Hajj) with its spiritual contents will be realized. The principle goal of the creation of the human being is to be able to recognize Allah and to attain intimacy with Allah through love.

This require the cleansing and purification of the spirit from immoral, lust, selfinterest and removing of self from satanic deeds.

Hajj consists of the migration from one's home, physical exhaustion, the giving of one's property, the bearing of one difficulties, the renewing of one's covenant and the presence of consciousness to Allah the Almighty.

Being in the state of Ihram and going to the wilderness of Arafat person recall the gather on the day of Judgment and the state of resurrection. By standing at Magam Ibrahim and all the sacred places, one's recall in gathering of the ancestors of the prophets from Adam (A.S.) to Mohammad (S) in review and realize their struggle against all evil forces to the call of spreading the Divine law to mankind.

Its Social Aspects

Hajj has magnificent social aspect and it gives the Muslim many benefits. To witness benefits for themselves" (Qoran 22:27)

All that brothers and sisters of Islam must know that one of the important aspects of Hajj is establishing of mutual understanding and strengthening the brotherhood of Muslims.

Its Political Aspects

"Allah made the Ka'aba the sacred House, a stand for mankind" (Holy Qoran) Allah alone in opposition to the satanic forces within oneself and in unity with other Muslims in opposition to satanic powers. No idols are worse and more dangerous than an arrogant leader who rebels against Allah commands, who have existed throughout history.

The Blessed Ka'aba of Allah is the only 5:97).

All of you, O distinguished visitors to the sacred House of Allah, one who hurried from the four points of the world to the House of Allah, center of Tauhid (monotheism) and place of Revelation the station of Ibrahim (A.S.) and Mohammad (S), these are the great idol breakers and the opponents of the arrogant, come let know them and be prepared to break the great idols who had appeared in the form of satanic plundering powers (of the East and the West) do not be afraid of these powers, place your trust in Allah and this magnificent station, bind the covenant of unity and mutual agreement in the face of musyrik and the evil one and be on guard against separation and conflict.

"And do not quarrel among yourselves for you will become weak and your strength will deport" (Qoran 8:46).

Listen to a warning from Allah S.W.T.

"Say, I only admonish you to one thing, that you rise up for Allah in company and alone" (Qoran 34:46)

All must rise up and must rise up for center of breaking and the destroying idols, Ibrahim, the friend of Allah at the beginning and later, Mohammad, the beloved of Allah and his child, Imam Mahdi, may our souls be sacrificed for him till end of time.

Allah said to Ibrahim "And proclaim the Hajj to men, they will come unto there on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, coming through deep ravines." (Qoran 22:27)

"And sanctify house for those who perform the tawaf (circumbulate) and those who stand and those who bow and those who prostrate themselves (there). (Qoran 22:28)

"And a proclamation from Allah and His messenger to all people on the day of great Hajj that Allah is free from obligation to the misreckon and (so it) His messenger" (Qoran 9:3)

We must follow to this sacred call and we store the idols and satans headed by the great satan in Agabah so that we will have perform the Hajj of Ibrahim, Mohammad and Imam Mahdi peace be upon them.

It is hope that all the respected pilgrims to the House of Allah wherever be may be to pray for the victory of Islam over the kufr and the return to majesty and glory of Islam to them, will repel the foreigners and world devorers from the lands and will send rain through the clouds of mercy and forgiveness upon all Muslims.

(Reference: Holy Qoran, Nahjul Balaghah, Worship and Development Imam Khomeini, Tawhid Journal).

Plane Survivors Credit Sorcerer for Escape

BOGOTA — The father of two young children found alive after a plane crash in a remote jungle-covered area of northwest Colombia said that a sorceress was the key to their rescue.

The children, aged five and three, were rescued by helicopter along with their grandmother on Monday, five days after the small commuter aircraft in which they were travelling disappeared in a guerrilla-infested area of Choco Province.

The children's mother died in the crash along with the plane's pilot and one other woman. (Reuter)

Siamese Babies Found Abandoned in Pakistan

KARACHI, Pakistan — New-born Siamese babies with only one head were abandoned at the office of a social work organization in the southern Pakistani city of Hyderabad, the Edhi Welfare Foundation said.

The Siamese, a boy and girl, were left in front of the Edhi Center in Hyderabad in the southern province of Sindh, an Edhi spokesman said.

The Siamese, joined together from the abdomen and chest, have four legs, four arms, but only one head, he said. (Reuter)

Polls Open in Croatia's Municipal Elections

ZAGREB — Polling stations across Croatia opened on Sunday for voters to cast their ballots in the first local and upper house elections since the end of the war.

Some 3.6 million voters, including the Serbs in the separatist region of eastern Slavonia, will vote to fill more than 10,000 seats at all levels of powers, from local municipal assemblies to the house of counties — the Upper House of the Croatian Parliament, the Sabor.

Polling stations opened at 7 a.m. local time (0500 GMT), and was to close 12 hours later. Hundreds of United Nations and other international observers will judge whether the vote is free and fair.

The elections are seen as a crucial test for the volatile eastern Slavonia region, where local Serbs are taking part in a vote organized by Zagreb for the first time since they rebelled against Croatian independence in 1991.

The poll is also an important test of popularity for President Franjo Tudjman, who faces re-election later this year, and his ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). (Reuter)

Indian PM Gets the Backing of Own Party

NEW DELHI — India's caretaker Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda got a boost Sunday when his party expressed full support for him despite the leadership crisis in the ousted coalition.

The Janata Dal (People's Party) said it would remain a member of the ousted United Front Coalition "under the leadership of H.D. Deve Gowda," a party spokesman said.

The Dal is the dominant constituent of the Front, whose 10-month-old coalition government lost a parliamentary vote of confidence Friday. The decision Sunday was taken by Dal leaders at a four-hour meeting.

Deve Gowda, who resigned early Saturday but has been asked to continue as a caretaker prime minister, was present at the meeting. (AFP)

Zairean Rebel Leader Kabila to Head for Talks

GOMA, Zaire — Zairean rebel leader Laurent Kabila is to give fresh impetus to peace talks with the Kinshasa authorities, probably with a visit to South Africa, his top foreign affairs official said here Sunday.

Kabila will travel "very soon, probably to South Africa, to boost the negotiations," the rebel Foreign Minister Bizima Karaha told a press conference here.

Asked if this meant that the leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire would be meeting Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, he said: "If necessary, he will meet him."

He reiterated the rebel demand that Mobutu leave power and repeated that no cease-fire could be considered before negotiations take place. (AFP)

Prodi Gets Warm Welcome in Vlore

TIRANA — Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi made a flying visit to the rebel-held southern Albanian town of Vlore on Sunday, telling townspeople that he "shared their pain," witnesses said.

Speaking from a balcony of the town hall, Prodi told thousands of residents: "I salute the people of Vlore. I offer my condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and I share their pain."

The Italian leader, accompanied by Albanian Prime Minister Bashkim Fino, was then whisked to Tirana aboard an Italian military helicopter for a meeting with President Sali Berhisa.

Italy leads a 6,000-strong multinational force being sent to Albania to secure routes for humanitarian supplies pouring into the country wracked by weeks of anarchy.

The unrest blew into a full-scale armed uprising in the south, with the port town of Vlore at its hub. (AFP)

Pope Appeals to Bosnian Leaders for Peace, Reconciliation

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Pope John Paul II appealed to Bosnians Sunday to foster forgiveness and transform Sarajevo from a symbol of suffering into a model of coexistence.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims braved bone-chilling cold, wind and snow flurries. Waving yellow and white flags, they converged on a soccer stadium near Sarajevo's wartime front line for the highlight of the 25-hour papal visit, an open-air mass.

NATO helicopters clattered over Sarajevo and security was tight to ensure the Pope's safety.

Tanks of Egyptian peacekeepers followed buses of pilgrims through the city streets. John Paul went ahead with the visit Saturday despite the discovery hours earlier of mines, plastic explosives and detonators under a bridge along his route into the city.

"Peace to you, men and women of Sarajevo" the Pope declared to warm applause from 60,000 people packing Kosevo Stadium. "Peace to you, people of Bosnia-Herzegovina peace to you, brothers and sisters of this beloved land"

Shielded from driving snow by a white umbrella, John Paul recalled his desire to visit Sarajevo while it was under Serb siege during the 3 1/2-year war that ended in late 1995.

Earlier Sunday, his meeting with the Muslim, Serb and Croat of Bosnia's three-man presidency Sunday morning before mass gave him his only face-to-face contact with a Bosnian Serb political leader.

The Serb member of the presidency, Momcilo Krajisnik, was a Bosnian Serb leader throughout the 3 1/2-year war, during which nearly 11,000 people were killed in Sarajevo by Serb siege and bombardment.

"Peace is possible, indeed peace is necessary," John Paul told the three politicians. (AP)

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (April 12): Pope John Paul II waves to the people gathering in front of the cathedral of Sarajevo. The pontiff arrived in Sarajevo at the start of a historic visit to Bosnia to promote reconciliation in the war-scarred country.

(AFP PHOTO)

British Police Battle Protesters in Central London

LONDON — Environmental activists battled with police in riot gear in central London on Saturday after a march calling for greater social justice turned violent.

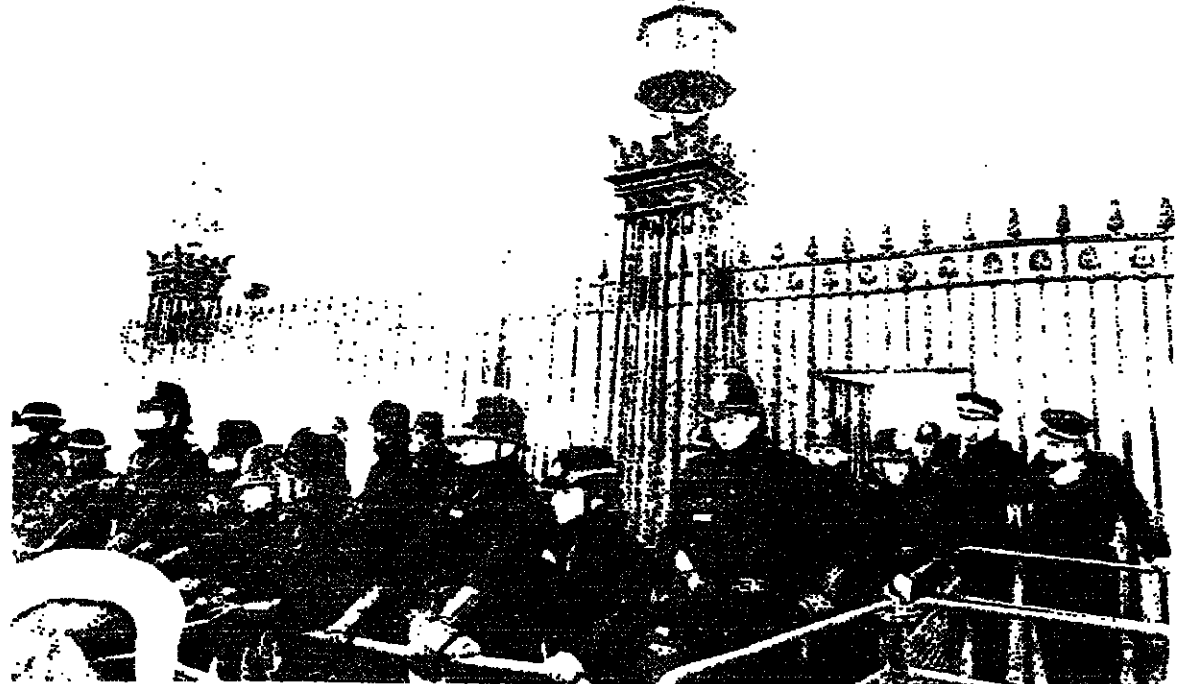
Police said at least four officers were injured when demonstrators bombarded them with cans, paint, sticks and smoke bombs at the entrance to Prime Minister John Major's official residence in Downing street.

Several arrests were made as police donned protective clothing and called in reinforcements on horseback.

The protesters were forced back to Trafalgar Square where the main bulk of the marchers had arrived peacefully for a rally highlighting disparities in living standards.

Early in the evening, police were involved in a series of running skirmishes with some of the protesters, mounting baton charges against a hail of bottles and other ammunition.

A police spokeswoman said protesters were breaking up paving stones and using the pieces as missiles. (Reuter)



LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM (April 12): An orange smoke bomb and distress flares form a backdrop at the entrance to Downing Street in London as hundreds of protesters harangue police standing behind barriers during a march to support sacked dockers and to demand the protection of social benefits in the United Kingdom.

(AFP PHOTO)

Belgian Police Find More Body Parts in Sacks

BRUSSELS — Belgian police on the trail of a serial killer said on Saturday they had found three more plastic rubbish sacks containing body parts near the southern town of Mons.

Police had previously found bin bags containing the surgically severed body parts of four women in the same area.

The three bags found on Saturday —one containing a head, another a leg and another a foot— were discovered alongside a road in the town of Havre, a Mons police officer told Reuters.

Belgian radio said they were originally spotted by a passer-by.

Police have so far found at least nine rubbish sacks containing body parts since the chance discovery last month of bags containing arms and legs in a ditch next to the Brussels-Paris railway line.

The new discovery appeared to be related to the others, but no other details were yet available about the identity of the body, the police officer said.

Police have said the other remains belonged to four Caucasian women. The Mons public prosecutor has said the killings appear to be the work of one person, noting the precise and identical way in which the bodies had been cut up. (Reuter)

Separate Explosions in Ethiopian Capital

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — Hand grenades were thrown into a hotel associated with the government and a restaurant popular with foreigners, killing one person and injuring 41 others, the private radio Fana said Sunday.

One grenade was tossed through the window of the Tigray Hotel in the central Piazza area, killing one woman and injuring 33 other people, three seriously, the radio said. The blast occurred at about 7:45 p.m. (1645 GMT) Saturday.

Minutes later, a grenade exploded at the Blue Tops Restaurant across the street from the National Museum, injuring eight people, six British and two French. Two of the British and one of the French were seriously wounded.

The two badly hurt Britons "were part of a police training team which Britain sometimes sends to help train officers in other countries," a British Foreign Office spokesman, insisting on customary anonymity, said in London. (AP)

Manpower Resources of Bangladesh

*Shah Muhammad Nasim**

Bangladesh is a densely populated country and a major challenge for the country is to utilize its vast manpower resources. The government has taken vigorous steps to raise domestic employment opportunities as well as seeking overseas jobs for the surplus manpower. Besides our traditional resources e.g. jute, tea, tobacco, sugarcane, potato, gas, oil, leather, fish and various industrial and consumer goods, trained and skilled manpower constitute the most potential and important national resource of Bangladesh. Since the independence, Bangladesh has undertaken various measures to produce various types of professional, skilled and semi-skilled manpower to meet national requirements on the one hand and pursue manpower export policy on the other with a view to meeting the requirements of friendly foreign countries in their socio-economic activities as well as to earn hard foreign currencies for its own development. Consequently nearly two million Bangladeshi nationals are currently working in a large number of friendly countries.

Skilled manpower is being produced by the government, non-government and private bodies in different training institutes. In addition to various universities and colleges, there are vocational, technical and professional institutes of this country which produce thousands of highly skilled and semi-skilled and various types of quality manpower every year. Bangladesh had the privilege of producing some of the finest technical hands in the world. For example, the Sears Tower in Chicago, the tallest building in the world was designed by a Bangladeshi architect. The most modern new airport building the Hajj Terminal in Jeddah was also designed by a Bangladeshi engineer. Such examples of expertise and proficiency of the Bangladeshi engineers, teachers, professionals and skilled workers are not hard to find. The concept of Grameen Bank (Rural Bank) pioneered by Dr. Mohammad Yunus a renowned Bangladeshi economist, has been universally accepted and it is being practiced in nearly one hundred countries of the world. The Bangladeshi economists drive for poverty alleviation has been fully acclaimed by the recently held Micro-Credit Summit in Washington. Even last month, a Bangladeshi scientist and doctor was awarded a special prize for his contributions in the oral rehydration program by President Rafsanjani in Tehran. The largest OIC body for technical training, the Islamic Institute of Technology (IIT) is located in Dhaka and it is imparting training to a large number of young people from various Muslim countries. The non-formal education model, launched by the BRAC in Bangladesh, has been followed in various developing countries.



(Contd. on Pg. 13)

Trade Between Bangladesh and Iran-Potentialities and Prospects

*By Mohammad Giashuddin**

The trade and economic relations between Bangladesh and Iran have historic dimensions and for centuries, the Persian caravans have bought carpets, silver, fruits and nuts and spices etc. to Bangal and took cotton, silk, jute etc. in exchange. During the British India, these caravans not only bought these goods but the traders also started investing through grant of loans. These traders were also pioneers in the re-exports and trading of goods like jute (kenaf) karpas (short staple local cotton), tea, earthen pots of Bengal to different markets in the West and Central Asia and also to other parts in South-Asia. Gradually, economic transformation and industrial revolution took place in Europe and Asia when traditional trade links were affected and trade between Bengal and Iran narrowed down. But Bangladeshi jute and tea exports to Iran and Iranian wool, carpet and spice trade to Bangladesh remained as a link which in the present time expanded along with closer cooperation in the fields of commerce, economics and cultural areas.

The economics of Bangladesh and Iran are largely complimentary in nature and there are tremendous scope and opportunities for further expansion and diversification of trade and economic cooperation. But largely, due to colonial influence, the trade ties did not develop in the past to its full potentials. Bangladesh, since her independence, has acquired technological innovation and trade diversification which has placed her firmly in the world trade. By adopting quicker technical transformation and renewed innovation, Bangladesh has emerged as an important trading partner. In addition to traditional items e.g. jute, jute products, tea, leather, Bangladesh now exports garments, electronics, pharmaceuticals, toiletries, fruits, vegetables, cables and wires and a large number of other items. The skilled and semi-skilled Bangladeshi manpower are working in various countries and taking active part in their socio-economic development.

As regards Bangladeshi non-traditional export items, it is necessary to underline that Bangladeshi garments are known for good quality and reasonable prices and the country has emerged as a major garments exporter. Similarly, quality electronic products e.g. radio, TV, VCR now being produced and assembled in Bangladesh, are being traded in domestic and international market at a very competitive prices. New items such as cables and wires, fertilizers, pesticides and new agricultural products are constantly added to the export list. Simultaneously, there has been marked improvement in the quality and pattern of traditional items like jute hessian, sacking, carpet backing, jute twine, and jute webbing tape, twine, yarn, mat felt jute erosion, cotton cloth for garments mixed with polyester or

(Contd. on Pg. 11)



President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani visiting the Bangladeshi pavilion at the Fifth Islamic Trade Fair in Tehran.

Bangladesh Towards Twenty First Century

Introduction

Standing at the threshold of a new century, the future course of the Bangladesh economy and society is important for policy planners as well as the common people of the country. Our basic goals have been economic growth, human resources development, poverty alleviation and self reliance. Despite gradual improvement in recent years in many areas including health, population planning, primary and female education, pervasive poverty still continues to haunt the majority of the people.

Accelerated economic growth, and along with this, human resources development, poverty alleviation and involvement of the disadvantaged groups including the women in the mainstream of development would remain to be the guiding principles of our development efforts in the coming years. The rate of inflation has been moderate, but the economic growth has been low and development of the vast majority of the people has still remained a great challenge for us.

Policy Framework

The constitution of Bangladesh provides for an exploitation free society based on economic and social justice with people being at the center of all development activities. It also provides that the state shall strive to ensure equal opportunities to all citizens and adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequalities between people, and eliminate all forms of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste or sex. In keeping with the spirit of constitutional commitment, the economic commitments of the present government (see box) accord top priority to accelerated and sustainable social and economic development of Bangladesh with focus on human development, poverty alleviation, women's participation and participatory planning.

To be specific, the agenda for the future will consist of continued action in the following areas:

Alleviation of Poverty

Alleviation of poverty by social mobilization of the poor at the grassroot level, and providing them necessary economic, technical, administrative and financial support and adoption of target group based development program;

Adoption of special measures to mitigate urban poverty, rehabilitation of the disadvantaged and the poor and arresting the growth of urban slums.

Human Resources and Social Development

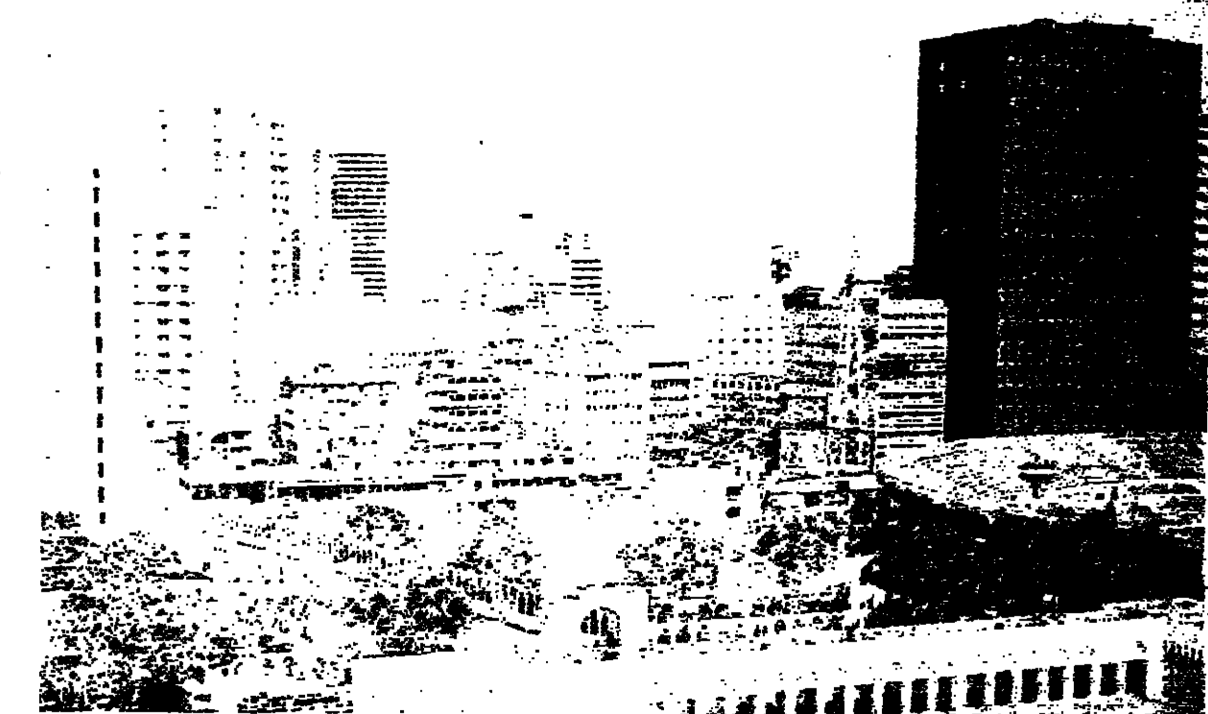
Human resources development by channeling more resources to HRD sectors while ensuring better utilization of existing capacity in health and education sectors, increasing the rate of literacy including the female literacy, recognizing that human development and poverty alleviation are complementary goals;

Social development by allocating larger proportion of resources to social sector development, particularly in health and education, the goal is to provide primary education and access to primary health care to all;

Child development by ensuring children's rights to basic services, such as education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, ensuring that infant and child mortality rates and malnutrition of children are reduced;

Gender Equality

Realizing the constitutional goal of gender equality, reduce inequality between men and women, integrate the women in the mainstreams of development and ensure their effective participation in development process through identification of their needs and problems.



The Capital City – Dhaka

Rural Development

Diversification of agriculture, by developing extensive horticulture, poultry, dairy, fisheries, oil seeds and coconut plantation in order to ensure access to a more balanced diet for the lower 50 percent of the population.

Ensure adequate availability of agricultural inputs like fertilizer, irrigation and agricultural implements and credit for agricultural development.

Strengthening of the national economy through development of the rural economy, with adequate provision of rural infrastructure involving roads, waterways and electricity supply, making the village a focal point of development, attempt to provide all villagers with safe drinking water and safe sanitation.

Self Sufficiency

Attain self sufficiency in the production of basic consumption goods such as clothing, medicines, paper and other daily necessities wherever comparative advantages so allow.

Infrastructure

---Develop physical infrastructure involving transport and communications, power, gas and water resources, and especially, rural electrification.

Making available adequate energy for domestic, industrial and commercial consumption and extend gas or alternative fuel supply to all or most of the towns and potential rural growth centers.

Reduce floods and cyclone damages to the minimum by improving disaster preparedness complemented by infrastructure building and rapid mitigation measures in the high risk zone.

(Contd. on Pg. 13)

Bangladesh Grows Quality Tea



Bangladesh is one of the major tea growing countries in the world. In the hill slopes of the country's eastern districts of Sylhet and Chittagong, the soil and climatic conditions are ideal for tea cultivation. This natural advantage enables Bangladesh to produce some of the best qualities of tea.

Tea is one of the major agro-based, labor-intensive and export-oriented industries of Bangladesh. It plays a vital role in the country's economy. It provides direct employment to more than 100,000 workers.

Bangladesh has more than 125 years of experience in tea cultivation. The first experimental cultivation was introduced in 1840 at a pioneer garden in Chittagong district. In the district of Sylhet, the first garden was established in 1857. This district was found most suitable for the tea shrubs and became, in course of time, one of the principal tea-growing areas in the region.

Background:

Bangladesh has inherited the southern-most slopes of the fertile, world-famous tea growing hills rolling down from Assam, commonly known as Surma-Valley. Once, these foothills abounded with bufallo, elephant and leopard. This is where the ferocious and majestic Royal Bengal Tiger roamed more than a *century ago before man moved* down from the north, cleaning the forests, setting up human abodes and turning the rich valley slopes into tea plantations.

The golden tip of the royal Bengal tiger's tail retreated to the south as the golden tips of tea became ripe for plucking in Bangladesh around the mid-19th century. In fact, first perimental tea plantation was carried out in the slopes of Chittagong in 1840 and Malnichera was the first commercial tea estate which went into production in 1857.

It did not take long for our teas to establish their place in the London Tea Auction and among the tea tasters and consumers. But the production of tea in those days was still in its primitive phase, each harvest being carried to ocean-going vessels in the Bay of Bengal by boats navigating an intricate networks of rivers.

Today, the picture is quite different.

As we enter the last decade of the 20th century, there is more to the tea growing industry than a heritage we can be proud of. Our soils are being improved. Our plantations are producing higher yields of the finest quality teas. We are caring for our workforce the descendants of the original tea planters and pluckers. Overall, the industry is flourishing as Bangladesh tea gains in prestige from season to season, auction to auction.

The golden tips of Bangladeshi tea are now here to stay. Join the millions and enjoy our teas.

Tea Estates and Acreage

At present, there are 156 tea estates in Bangladesh. The tea estates cover 1,13,731 hectares of land, of which 46,444 hectares are under tea cultivation.

Agencies Assisting Tea Export

Bangladesh Tea Board
171-172 Baizid Bostami Road
Nasirabad, Chittagong
Tel: 210239, 212448, 210491
Tlx: 66034 BTB CG BJ
Fax: 880-2-863237
Cable: TEABANGLA

Bangladeshiyo Cha Sangsad
Dar-e-Shahidi Building
69, Agrabad C/A (3rd Floor)
Chittagong
Tel: 501009, 501274
Cable: TEA

Export Promotion Bureau
Chamber Building
122-124, Motijheel C/A,
Dhaka-1000
Tel: PABX 232245-9
Tlx: 642204 EPBB BJ
Fax: 880-2-863167
Chamber Building
Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 502476, 503132
Tlx: 677001 EPBB BJ
Fax: 880-31-225540

Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh
Dar-e-Shahid Building
69 Agrabad C/A (3rd floor)
Chittagong
Tel: 501658, 502464
Cable: SALETEA

Tea Broking Houses

Bangladesh Tea Brokers Ltd.
Commercial Court
95, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 502672, 501772

National Brokers Ltd.
O.R. *Nizam House*
31, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 502372-74
Tlx: 66452 NATBROK BJ
Fax: 880-31-225273

Produce Brokers Ltd.
Dar-e-Shahid Building
69, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 503937, 503565

Progressive Brokers Ltd.
Dar-e-Shahid Building
69, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 506076
Tlx: 66440 RONNI BJ

Purba Bangla Brokers Ltd.
1, Jahan Building
Agrabad, Chittagong
Tel: 502715, 503345

Unity Brokers Ltd.
Suraiya Mansion
30, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 504092, 501931

Blenders and Packet Tea Exporters

Bangladesh Tea Limited
Commercial Court
95, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 501772, 502494
Fax: 880-31-225544

Duncan Brothers (Bd) Ltd.
Ispahani Building
Agrabad, Chittagong
Tel: ..01858, 501571
Tlx: 66208 OSBNA BJ
Fax: 880-31-501571

HRC Syndicate Ltd.
Jiban Bima Bhaban
1053, Sk. Mujib Road
Agrabad, Chittagong
Tel: 504313, 502123
Tlx: 633126 HRC BJ
Fax: 880-31-225625

James Finlay P.L.C.
Finlay House
Agrabad, Chittagong
Tel: 500631-35
Tlx: 66231 JFCO BJ
Fax: 880-31-225207

Lever Brothers (Bd) Limited
Jiban Bima Bhaban
56, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 501671, 503384
Tlx: 66313 LBTEA BJ
Fax: 880-31-225294

M.M. Ispahani Limited
Ispahani Building
Agrabad C/A, Chittagong
Tel: 501671, 503384
Tlx: 66313 LBTEA BJ
Fax: 880-31-225294

Shaw Wallace (Bd) Ltd.
G.P.O. Box No. 12
Strand Road, Chittagong
Tel: 500624-6
Tlx: 66226, SWBC BJ
Fax: 880-31-225245

Importing Countries

Pakistan, Egypt, U.K., Russia, China, Afghanistan, Poland, Iran, Germany, Singapore, Holland, Romania, U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, Bulgaria, Japan, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, France,

(Contd. on Pg. 15)

Jute: The Golden Fiber of Bangladesh

Jute, a natural fiber of international eminence, is the bark of a slender herbaceous agricultural plant of tropical and sub-tropical origin.

End-usages of jute: jute is ideally used as bags and sacks for packing almost all sorts of agricultural produces, minerals, fertilizer cement etc., wool packs and cotton bales, wrapping materials, carrier fabric to cover inner springs in auto seats and upholster furniture; cargo separator in ship; brattice cloth for mine ventilation and partition; filling material in cable; roofing and floor covering apparel, footwear linings; wall coverings and furnishing fabric: fashion accessories; jute geo-textile for erosion control and many more.

Advantages of jute over other man-made fiber is still supreme in modern world. Under stress jute extends only 0.5 percent a break and gives wonderful dimensional stability. The hairy



surface of jute fabric gives it a capacity of grip any surface it comes in contact with. They can for this reason be stacked high and wide without any risk of slippage.

The ignition temperature of jute is 193 degrees C. It thus remains very stable upto near ignition point. Even at boiling temperature, it keeps it's physical properties intact, jute being hygro-scopic and auriferous permits normal breathing and humidity for the contents and so ensures their long storage without deterioration. Hooks may be used freely and easily on jute products during handling as its innate properties cover up the holes immediately after.

It thus prevents seepage loss of goods during transportation and allows itself to be re-used over and over again. Jute being natural is biodegradable, so, it does not plug the natural pore of the earth soil and surface. When burned, it emits the same as a burning wood which as we know, is not dangerous. It has no adverse effect on human body and on nature as a whole. Protecting environment is one of the things it does for all our tomorrows.

BJMC: World's Biggest Manufacturer and Export of Jute Goods:

Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) is a state owned organization engaged in manufacturing and exporting of jute goods, it controls 38 jute and allied enterprises and processes about 3,50,000 tons of jute goods of diverse categories and specifications. It alone annually exports about 3,00,000 tons of its product mixes to 100 or so countries of the world. Over 150 thousand people of BJMC with long standing expertise are devoted to attend to any one's need at any time and place.

BJMC can be contacted on Telex: 642223/64224/67676/675662 and fax: (008802-) 863985, 9567508.

BJMC Product Mixes

BJMC produces the best quality jute goods from the world's best raw jute. It has the name and fame as the most dependable manufacturer and supplier of jute goods of any quality and quantity around the globe. The broad product ranges of BJMC are as below:

Hessian Cloth:

Sizes: Available as per buyer's requirement; sewing: herackle and overhead (safety sewing optional); color: natural, semi-brite, brite, bleached and dyed; branding: upto three color; packing: 500/1,000 bags flat/folded in iron bound bale; standard bags: Australian Brand Bag, cotton pack, fertilizer bag, Japanese rice bag, onion pocket, potato bag, sand bag, shopping bag.

Sacking Cloth

Width: 20 to 37 inches; weight: 11 to 24 ozs, weaving: plain and twill, color: natural, bleached and dyed; packing: 500/1,000 yards in iron bound bale.

Sacking Bag

Sizes: standard; weight: standard or light; sewing: overhead dry and overhead tar (safety sewing optional); color: natural, dyed and bleached; branding; upto three color; packing 200-5,000 bags flat/folded in iron bound bale.

Standard Sacking

a) Twill Bag: Twill bag (44"f26.5"2.50 lbs), binola bag (44:f26.5"2 lbs), corn sack (37"f231.59 lbs), coffee bag (40:f282.25 lbs), grain sack (45"f302.45 lbs), sugar twill (48"f28"2.25 lbs).

b) Double wrap sacking bag: heavycees (40"f28"2.25 lbs) lightecees (40"f28"2 lbs), D.W. flour bag (58"f28"2.25/2.50 lbs), D.W. salt bag (40"f23.5"1.41 lbs), D.W. nitrate bag (33" f24"25 ozs), D.W. sack sack (39 m.37"f23.62"1.42 1.43 lbs).

Carpet Backing Cloth

Primary Backing: width: 40"20.3", weight 8 oz of above, secondary backing: width: 40:20.3"; weight 5.57 oz; packing 5001000 yards per roll.

Wool Pack

Qualities: standard wool pack, Australian new improved wool pack, New Zealand wool pack, mini-wool pack and coffin type wool pack; packing 50 packs per bale.

Tarpaulin and Canvas

Width: 3,645 inches; weight 1 lbs 12 ozes to 2 lbs 14 ozs. Backing 600800 yards per bale.

Laminated Fabric and Bag

Qualities: Hessian/sacking/CBC/canvas/tarpaulin; coating: paper/polythene coated; packing 1,000 yards per roll/300100 bags per bale; color: natural, bleached and dyed.

Jute Matting

Width: 3 feet, length: 150 feet; design: plain and design: weight; design 2.50 lbs/yd, plain 2.25 lbs/yd; packing 150 feed per roll; use: both side.

Jute Pile Carpet

Made of 100 percent natural fiber, free from static electricity, pollution and health hazard, finished with back-coating and fire resistance agent, BJMC produces and exports jute carpets of fabulous designs of following specifications:

Golden Tiger

Plain carpet size: 6gf50g and 12gf50g: pile height: 10mm"1mm; pile density: 126 & 135 per sq. Inch.

Diversified Products

With continued pursuit backed by innovative expertise, BJMC came up with a variety of non-traditional products as under for their commercial production and marketing:

Jute Intermediate Bulk Container (JIBC): Capable to contain one ton of material and equipped with both manual and mechanized handling and controlled filling system.

GRAMEEN





GRAMEEN BANK -- A BANK FOR THE POOR


Dr. Mohammad Yunus, Founder of Grameen Bank.

Bangladeshi Professor Dr. Mohammad Yunus launched the Grameen Bank (Rural Bank) as an action research project in 1976. Today after 2 decades, the Grameen Bank is recognized as a highly successful micro-credit scheme all over the world and it is practiced in more than 50 countries.

The Grameen Bank deals with the rural landless poor who generally remain outside the orbit of the banking system, although they are usually in dire need of credit. This is particularly true in a country like Bangladesh where an estimated 80% of the population live below the poverty line and over 50% are landless. The conventional banking system fails to provide them with any kind of service because it is generally held that the poor are a high-risk category to lend to.

It was in order to challenge conventional banking wisdom with its emphasis on collateral and to dispel some of the myths that exist about poverty (e.g. that the poor do not pay back loans properly) that Dr. Yunus set up this institution particularly to explore the possibilities of and design a frame-work for a system which would bring the rural poor within a viable banking network. The action-research project which he called the "Grameen Bank Project" came into being with the following objectives:

I. To extend banking facilities to poor men and women;

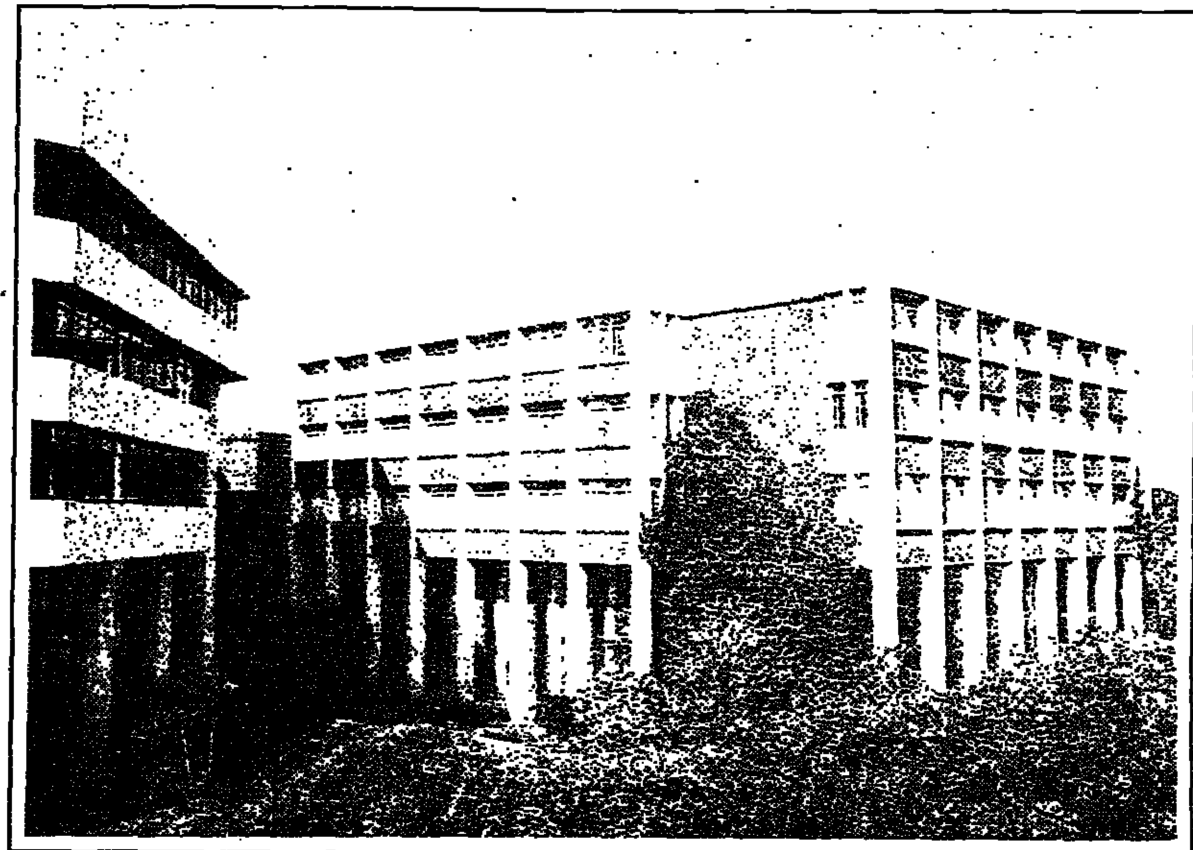
II. To eliminate the exploitation of the money-lenders;

III. To create opportunities for self-employment for the vast unutilized or under-utilized manpower resources;

IV. To bring the disadvantaged people within the folds of some organizational format which they can understand and operate within, and can find socio-political and economic strength through mutual support; and

V. To reverse the age-old vicious cycle of "low-income, low savings, low investment, low income into an expanding system of low income credit, investment, more income, more credit, more investment."

The project demonstrated its strength in the villages in Chittagong between 1976 and 1979 and then, with the sponsorship of the Bangladesh Bank, and the support of nationalized commercial banks and the Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB), it was extended to other districts in Bangladesh. In September 1983, the Grameen Bank Project was transformed into an independent bank, with the name of "GRAMEEN BANK." The Bangladesh Government initially provided 60% of the Bank's paid-up share capital while 40% was held by the borrowers of the Bank. In July 1986, the Government raised the paid-up share capital to Bangladeshi taka 72 million (2 million dollars) out of which the (Contd. on Pg. 15)


Head office of the Grameen Bank

Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau and Its Role

The Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) started functioning as a semi-autonomous body from January 1978. The Bureau is run by a 15 member Board of Management and the Commerce Minister is the ex-officio Chairman, while the Vice Chairman is the Chief Executive of the Bureau. The EPB is mainly responsible for assisting the country's export development and promotion efforts through the provision of trade promotion services. The more important of these services include assistance in the formulation and implementation of export policy, product and market development, rationalization of export incentive system, participation in international trade fairs and provision of export support and functional advisory services. The EPB works in close co-operation with the national institutions involved in trade promotion as well as the international trade promotion agencies, notably the UNDP, ITC, CFTC, EU and the World Bank.

The EPB plays a key role in formulating proposals for export policies and implementing them through appropriate work programs. It successfully carries out these tasks in stages, first, through consultative meetings with the exporter groups and concerned government institutions, secondly, through briefing papers prepared for examination by the high-powered Export Promotion Council, Task Force and National Committee for Exports and finally, by incorporating the consensus of views arrived at in the earlier stages for consideration of the Government.

Another main focus of EPB's activities is to assist producers and exporters to increase agricultural and industrial production for export, strengthen and expand market position. This is achieved through technical advice and assistance given in product development, value-added processing, improved quality control, packaging and post harvest handling in the area of supply improvement. the cumulative impact of product development and export market promotion services could be seen from the overall export earnings. Inspite of world-wide economic recession and fall in international market prices, Bangladesh's export performance during the last 4 years was quite impressive, which may be evident from the fact that the export earnings rose by 9.5%, 6.3%, 37.04% and 11.8% during 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 financial years respectively.



Electronics Factory in Chittagong, the port city of Bangladesh.

Among the principal commodities there has been an increase in the export earnings during the year under review in respect of frozen food (2.63%), tea (1.01%), agricultural products (65.90%), raw jute (14.18%), leather (4.76%), jute goods (3.18%), knitwear (52.14%), reaymade garments (6.20%), engineering products (52.76%) and other commodities (32.11%). The EPB, in co-operation with other concerned institutions is instrumental in the introduction of the Duty Draw Back Flat Rate scheme, instituting Bonded Warehouse facility, widening the coverage of the back-to-back L/C system, introduction of the Export Development Fund, providing Income Tax Rebate, rationalization of the Export Development Fund, rationalization of the exchange rate, allowing retention of foreign exchange out of the export proceeds up to 40%.

During 1995-96 participation in 16 international trade fairs was organized by the EPB. 150 exporters including 142 from private sector participated in those trade fairs. Besides, 6 single country exhibitions and one SAARC fair were organized by EPB in different countries of the world. As a result, spot export orders amounting to U.S.$13,79,22,766 and potential orders worth U.S.$2,25,90,250 were received in addition to 701 trade enquiries on different export items. The EPB has recently organized the 3rd Dhaka International Trade Fair '97 from 22 February to 21 March 1997 in which nearly 100 companies from 24 countries took part.

In addition, the EPB provides various export support services, trains exporters, supplies trade information, undertakes various export development and promotion projects, and also extends functional advisory services.

The EPB has made substantial progress in the promotional and developmental activities during the last four years. Despite the worldwide economic recession and the subsequent sluggish economic recovery, export earnings showed a growth of 62.93%, amounting to U.S.$3882.42 million till the end of 1996.

The EPB has succeeded in establishing close working and consultative relationship with the exporting community as a whole. Significant contributions have been made towards the creation of greater export awareness and the emergence of a professional approach to exporters to gain access to and maintain market positions in some of the most developed markets. It has also succeeded with the assistance of other national institutions, in establishing and administering an export incentive and policy formulation and implementation system comparable to those operating in the neighboring countries —India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Foreign Policy of Bangladesh

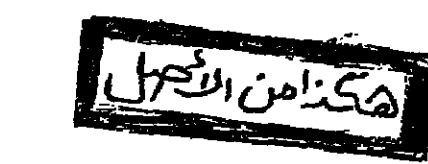
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ladesh has also entered into subregional cooperation with the immediate neighbors under the framework of SAARC.

Another significant aspect of Bangladesh's foreign policy is its close linkages with the Muslim countries. Soon after the independence Bangladesh endeavored to build up friendly relations with Muslim countries and was successful in a short time. She participated in the second Islamic Summit Conference which was held in Pakistan in February 1974. Within OIC her role has always been active and constructive for the greater interests of Muslim ummah. Bangladesh was a member of the Al-Quds Committee as well as the OIC mediation team for Iran-Iraq war. Bangladesh has also been a constant supporter of just causes of Palestine and Arabs against Israel.

Economic diplomacy is a new dimension of today's foreign policy of Bangladesh. It has assumed a significant role for Bangladesh which aspires rapid economic growth for its people. Promotion of foreign trade and investment in a competitive global environment constitutes the core idea of economic diplomacy. Recently, Bangladesh took a major initiative at the Micro-Credit Summit for alleviation of poverty.

* The author is the First Secretary (Political) in the Bangladesh Embassy in Tehran and the views expressed in the article are his own.



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(Contd. from Pg. 1)

Prime Minister's Message

mosphere for private and foreign investments. A package of attractive incentives and encouraging facilities are being offered to draw foreign investment. I believe, the independence will be meaningful only when we will be able to make the poor, distressed and the hapless feel happy, that is how we can pay our tribute to the Father of the Nation and build the 'Golden Bengal' by establishing the society on a plinth of justice, ensuring people's economic freedom and giving democracy an institutional shape.

Our brethren, spread all over the world, are toiling to earn foreign currency for the country through hard labor and thereby playing a very significant role in the development of the country. As the goodwill ambassadors of the country in the international arena, I hope, they will be ceaseless in their efforts to uphold the image of the motherland abroad.

I wish my countrymen living at home and abroad continued happiness, peace and prosperity. May the Most Merciful bestow His divine blessings on us in all efforts.

Joy Bangla,
Joy Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh live forever

Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic Bangladesh

(Contd. from Pg. 5)

TRADE ....

cotton. Jute as a natural fiber not only earned its name in the world market, but also proved as the most versatile natural fiber with diversified use. More importantly, it is completely environment friendly. The Bangladesh jute, renowned for its quality, has regained its market in the global trade as a superior natural fiber and experts opined that to fight with present day pollution, jute would retain its unique position as the most preferred, pollution free fiber in the world.

It is important to note that Iranian users have continued to maintain their clear preference for this natural fiber. This has definitely contributed to the society in maintaining a pollution free environment. Realizing the importance of jute as a natural fiber, the world community came forward to set up an International Jute Organization (IJO) with its Headquarters in Bangladesh. Five principal jute producing countries and about 16 users are its members. The IJO's main attention has been focused on continued improvement and diversified uses of jute. The Iranian users in this respect deserve appreciation that they continue to use jute in the construction, packing and sacking cotton, paddy, rice, and variety of grains. The utility of jute fiber, hessian (locally called chahtai) has many other advantages for use in lieu of plastic and polyesters.

Similarly, Bangladeshi tea, known for its strong color and rich taste, is a preferred drink in the Iranian market. Iran traditionally consumes large quantities of tea made available both from local and imported sources. Bangladesh tea although imported by Iran in small quantities, has its name among the local tea drinkers and its price have been very competitive compared to other brands of drinks.

There are, however, tremendous prospects for broadening of trade ties between Bangladesh and Iran. Bangladesh needs a wide range of goods and services which Iran can supply. Following discussions at the last joint economic commission session held in Tehran, Bangladesh came forward to buy a large quantity of bitumen from Iran. Due to irregular shipping facilities, the agreed quantity of 70,000 tons has not yet been delivered. Bangladesh ship took two voyages to carry about 20,000 tons. For the remaining quantity, Bangladesh has requested Iran to provide shipping facilities. Bangladesh needs large quantities of bitumen for its road pavement, construction and other traditional uses. It may be highlighted that both the countries are currently finalizing the setting up of a joint oil refinery project in Bangladesh.

In other sectors, both Bangladesh and Iran have potentialities for inter-country trade at each other's advantage. In the transportation sector, Bangladesh ordered for 66 railway wagon from the Wagon Pars. If these wagons are delivered and found suitable, more might be ordered by Bangladesh railway. Bangladesh, Iran and Turkmenistan have signed a trilateral MOU for transportation of Bangladeshi exports to the Central Asian republics, through Iranian ports and railway facilities.

In other sectors also there exist significant potentialities which both the countries might exploit through exchange of traders, industrialists and investors. It is believed that given the awareness and renewed commitment made by the officials and experts of both the countries, the trade and economic relations between the two countries would be broadened and diversified to their mutual benefits.

* The author is the Commercial Counselor in the Bangladesh Embassy in Tehran and the views expressed are his own.

(Contd. from Pg. 1)

Foreign Minister's Message

portant role in promoting friendship and cooperation in the region as well as throughout the world. Bangladesh has earned admiration for her continued participation in the UN peacekeeping operations in different parts of the world. Bangladesh has become the pioneer of poverty alleviation through micro-credit mechanism of economic development and Hon'ble Prime Minister's active participation as Co-Chair of the recently held Micro-credit Summit in Washington is an eloquent testimony to that. The continued thrust of her government on economic diplomacy through image-building and favorable projection of the country abroad has already borne fruit as a definite interest has been created among foreign investors on Bangladesh.

A good number of Bangladeshis are now working in different countries of the world. They are our envoys of goodwill, friendship and cooperation. On this glorious occasion I call upon them to further strengthen their efforts in promoting the image of the country in the countries they live in, and to actively participate in the development process of the nation. Our government has put its full weight behind the reform and liberalization of the economy with a specific objective of attracting foreign investment. Our Missions abroad should take upon themselves the responsibility to look after the welfare of the expatriate Bangladeshis and extend all-necessary cooperation to them in enhancing our image abroad.

I wish all of you success, prosperity and happiness.

Joy Bangla.

Abdus Samad Azad
Foreign Minister
Government of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh

(Contd. from Pg. 2)

Achievements ...

dum of understanding for direct foreign investment to the tune of U.S.$1,050 million.

17. Emphasis has been given to strengthen our diplomatic ties with the world outside specially with the neighboring countries. During the visit of the Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, she had discussions with the Saudi king on bilateral, international and regional issues.

18. During her five day visit to China, four bilateral agreements have been signed. Under two agreements out of the four, China will provide 130 million taka as soft loan for the development of Bangladesh. Investors in Hong Kong have been called upon to invest in Bangladesh and a positive response in this regard has been received.

19. The prime minister attended the last UNGA and she depicted a clear picture of Bangladesh regarding building of democratic institutions, establishing rule of law and Bangladesh's stands on different international issues before the international community. During the visit, Bangladesh signed Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in New York.

The people of the country are now on the brink of reaping the benefits of the programs aforementioned. The government of Sheikh Hasina has made people harbor the dream and make them believe that the nation could pay its best tribute to the Father of the Nation and build the 'Golden Bangla' by establishing a society on a plinth of justice to ensure people's economic emancipation and give democracy an institutional shape. In recognition of her contribution to democracy, Boston University has conferred on her the degree, Doctor of Law, honoris causa.

(Contd. from Pg. 4)

BANGLADESH AND OIC...

and Islam is a powerful force in the country. Religion serves as a cushion against the social and economic malaise that threaten the lives of the people in developing countries, and Bangladesh has not been an exception. Furthermore, devotees of all religions hold the birthplace of their respective religions in reverence, and in the same way, the countries of the Middle East are held in great respect by the people of Bangladesh. Apart from that, Bangladesh has always had great sympathy for the Al-Quds cause, which is at the core of the OIC. Bangladesh is probably the only Muslim country that does not border another predominantly Muslim country.

Admission to the OIC

Bangladesh attended the Fourth Non-aligned Summit in Algiers in September 1973, and the country's admission at the summit was hailed by its leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as an acknowledgment of its sovereign status by the majority of the Arab and African states. The reaction of the OIC to the emergence of Bangladesh — since it had broken away from another large Muslim state — had been cautious. During the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, Bangladesh supported the cause of the Arabs and sent a medical team. The pro-Islamic sentiments expressed by the government of Bangladesh impressed the Arabs and other Muslim leaders. The leaders of the Muslim countries were now in a dilemma: Bangladesh was the second largest Muslim majority state in the world, but it was not yet a member of the OIC and could not surely be kept out of it permanently. The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) — the second highest body of the OIC — meeting in March 1973, formed a group of seven states to look into ways to bring Bangladesh into the OIC. On February 21, 1974 the "mission of reconciliation", headed by the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, came to Dhaka to request Sheikh Mujib to participate in the second OIC summit in Lahore in Pakistan and escorted him to the summit. The summit proved to be a great diplomatic gain for Bangladesh and the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Political Dimensions and Bangladesh's Role on Major OIC Issues

Within a very short time, Bangladesh became a very active member of the OIC and was able to secure membership in major special committees of the OIC. It sought to maintain a prominent position in the organization's political, economic, social and cultural fields and fought for Arab and Palestinian causes at the UN, the Non-Aligned conferences and other multilateral organizations. In 1983 Bangladesh hosted the 14th ICFM. Bangladeshis continue to serve in high positions in the OIC secretariat and other OIC bodies.

Having itself paid a heavy price for its independence, Bangladesh has always declared its total involvement in the freedom struggle of the Palestinian people. In 1979 Bangladesh was unanimously elected to the Jerusalem or Al-Quds Ministerial Committee and was made a member of the special Summit-level Jerusalem Committee (the other members were Morocco and Guinea). During its membership in the UN Security Council in 1980-81, Bangladesh upheld the cause of Palestine.

The outbreak of hostilities between Iran and Iraq in 1980 destabilized the situation in the Middle East, and the OIC set up an Islamic goodwill Summit-level Committee, known as the Islamic Peace Committee (IPC), to try to solve the issue. Bangladesh was one of the members of the committee and was actively involved in the process of mediation. When the armed hostilities between Iran and Iraq came to an end in August 1988, an United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) was set up. Out of the twenty-four countries that sent observers to the UNIIMOG, six were OIC members, Bangladesh being one of them.

Bangladesh condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and contributed troops to the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM). After the liberation of Kuwait, Bangladesh played a major role in the reconstruction of the country.

On the question of Bosnia, Bangladesh played a prominent role in the international fora. In recognition Bangladesh was made a member of the OIC Contact Group on Bosnia. Bangladesh actively participated in the formulation of the policies on sensitive issues like the withdrawal of arms embargo on Bosnia and measures to protect UN safe areas. Bangladesh is an active member of the OIC Assistance Mobilization Group in Bosnia and its troops participated in the United Nations Peace and Reconstruction Forces (UNPROFOR). Bangladesh is also a member of the OIC Committee on Southern Philippines which recently brought peace and reconciliation between the Philippines government and the Muslim population of southern Philippines.

Economic and Technical Cooperation

At the ICFM in August 1974, soon after its admission into the OIC, Bangladesh became one of the founder-members of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), an institution organized within the framework of the OIC. Bangladesh continues to call for increased cooperation among the OIC member countries in the economic, technical and commercial fields and has espoused the cause of the developing countries within the organization. Bangladesh has urged the formation of a food security system for the Islamic countries and has also proposed the establishment of an Islamic Common Market.

The OIC subsidiary organ, the Islamic Institute of Technology (IIT) is based in Dhaka in Bangladesh. The IIT trains students in various vocational areas. The Islamic University of Bangladesh is affiliated to the OIC.

Conclusion

Bangladesh's position on the major political issues before the OIC are in accord with the mainstream thought in the Islamic world, and membership of the OIC remains an important aspect of Bangladesh's foreign policy. The Arab and Islamic countries continue to be an area of economic interest for Bangladesh. By its membership in the OIC, the country has gained collective strength and received recognition as a balanced Islamic and non-aligned state.

* The author, wife of the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Iran, received her Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India in 1989 for her dissertation entitled "Bangladesh and the OIC: 1971: 1988"

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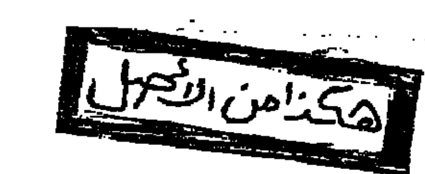
Ambassador's Message

During the past year, a new democratic government, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, has come to power in Bangladesh, through free and fair elections conducted by a neutral caretaker government. Since then, commendable progress has been made in various socio-economic sectors and a favorable atmosphere has been created for private and foreign investments. Side by side, the government has taken necessary steps to build a just and fair society, to ensure the people's economic emancipation and to give democracy an institutional shape.

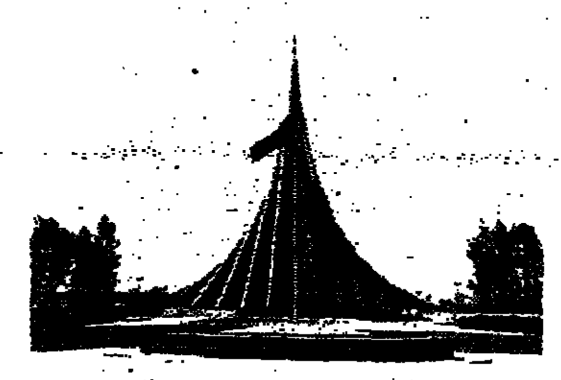
Turning to our bilateral relations, I would like to underscore that Bangladesh and Iran are tied by close bonds of friendship and cooperation based on common faith, culture and traditions. This historic and brotherly ties have been further expanded and consolidated during the past year. The tremendous momentum generated by the visit of His Excellency President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to Bangladesh, has been maintained and the Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) which were signed during that visit are being implemented. The year also witnessed exchange of several ministerial and high-level visits between our two brotherly countries. We have also successfully participated in international trade fairs and various competitions held in each other's capitals.

On the international front, Bangladesh has always played a positive and constructive role to promote peace and security in our region and the world at large. At the UN, we have made our humble contributions to build a new world order based on justice and fair play. Bangladesh also had the privilege of serving in various UN peacekeeping operations. Likewise, Bangladesh also played an active part in the OIC, the NAM, the Group of 77 and the Commonwealth. In our region, Bangladesh has consistently striven to promote and strengthen good relations among all the South Asian countries through regional cooperation un-

(Contd. on Pg. 13)



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NATIONAL DAY OF BANGLADESH



MONDAY APRIL 14, 1997; FARVARDIN 25, 1376; ZIL-HAJJEH 6, 1417

TEHRAN TIMES SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Work Unitedly, Keep National Interest Above Everything



JUSTICE SHAHABUDDIN AHMED
PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH

On the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the Independence and National Day, I extend my greetings to my countrymen living at home and abroad.

Today, I recall with gratitude the immense sacrifices made by the freedom fighters, and the contributions by the people of all walks of life including intellectuals, journalists and political leaders, to the achievement of this independence through the sanguinary war of liberation. I pray to the Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of those who had courted martyrdom during the war.

Bangladesh is independent and sovereign today. But we must keep in mind that this independence was achieved at a very heavy cost. The high ideals and principles for which the independence was achieved, such as — democracy, rule of law, human rights, freedom, liberty, justice and egalitarian society — were no doubt embodied in the constitution which was made and adopted within the shortest possible time after liberation. But the democratic process set in motion under the constitution got several setbacks and the state-power was seized on many occasions by unconstitutional means. However, by further struggle and sacrifice of the people, democracy was restored by the free and fair general election of 1991 and parliamentary form of government was reintroduced.

We still have a long way to go and we must keep the democratic process alive and functioning by all means. Democracy cannot function without tolerance of different views and principles of political parties. I would appeal to the countrymen, particularly the political leaders, to respect the views of their rivals and work unitedly on the basis of a consensus on vital issues keeping the national interest above everything else.

The constitution, among other things, requires development of local government to be run by elected representatives of people at all levels. It is highly appreciated that the present government has taken positive steps in this direction. In the field of economic development, market economy is being pursued and policy of foreign investment has been liberalized in different sectors including power, transport and communication.

Our country is small in area, but our population is a very large one. This population can be turned into a great asset, as a skilled manpower by appropriate education and training. Educational institutions must be made free from violence and terrorism and students must no longer be used for political purposes.

Today, on this solemn occasion, I would appeal to the countrymen to shun petty rivalries, jealousies and intolerance and take a fresh vow to devote wholeheartedly to the realization of the dream of 'Sonar Bangla'.

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed
President
People's Republic of Bangladesh
Dhaka



FATHER OF THE NATION
BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN

PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Bangladesh Will Never Compromise with Injustice



SHEIKH HASINA
PRIME MINISTER OF BANGLADESH

I extend my heartiest felicitations and sincere greetings to all my countrymen living at home and abroad on the red letter day of the 26th March, our great Independence and National Day.

I recall with deep respect of all martyrs who sacrificed their priceless lives to liberate the country. Also, I recall the memories of the martyrs of all democratic movements and movements for achieving self-rule including the historic Language Movement, Education Movement, Six Point and Eleven Point Movements, mass upheaval and the crucial elections of 1970. I pray to Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of the departed souls of the martyrs. I express my sincere sympathy to the mothers and sisters who had lost the highest glory of womanhood to the brutal Pakistani occupation forces. I also express my gratitude to the international community and organizations who stood besides us with moral support and assistance during the war of our liberation. I pay the richest of tributes to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who had imbued the nation by his glorious struggle throughout the life, charismatic leadership, and farsightedness to win the freedom.

With the independence achieved, the Father of the Nation took all out efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the war ravaged and economically ruined Bangladesh but a group of conspirators and killers put an end to his life leaving his tasks unfinished and adding a black chapter in the history of our national life. The efforts of translating the dream of Bangabandhu into the reality of a 'Golden Bengal' was stopped. Consequently the politics of conspiracy and killing started prevailing in the country. Democracy and rule of law were being trampled by the autocrats. The four national leaders Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, M. Mansoor Ali and A.H.M. Quamruzzaman who took pioneering role in the war of our liberation were brutally killed in jail custody on November 3, 1975.

The people of Bangladesh never compromise with injustice. They always raise their voice against misrule. They threw out the autocrat from the seat of power through yet another struggle. The right of franchise was established through the general election held on June 12, 1996 under a neutral caretaker government. Efforts are now underway for economic emancipation of the people, taking the people alongside the government in this march.

Steps have been taken to establish a society free from corruption and exploitation. We have laid special emphasis on poverty alleviation and untiring efforts are undertaken to establish the rule of law. The government has taken various measures to infuse dynamism in all the activities of a stagnant economy inherited from the predecessors. We have created a favorable at-

(Contd. on Pg. 11)

FOREIGN MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Bangladesh Pursues Positive Relationship

On this auspicious and happy occasion of the 26th anniversary of our National and Independence Day, I extend my heartiest felicitations to all countrymen at home and abroad. On this day I join you in paying homage to the valiant freedom fighters and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom, independence and national liberty of Bangalees.

The March 26 is the most important event in our national history. On this day Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Father of the Nation declared independence of Bangladesh and called upon Bangalees to launch the much awaited struggle for liberating the country from the army of occupation and alien rule.



ABDUS SAMAD AZAD
FOREIGN MINISTER OF BANGLADESH

It is a matter of great satisfaction that today the political party that led the war of liberation under the leadership of Bangabandhu has come to power with the daughter of Bangabandhu as the Prime Minister following a free and fair election conducted by a neutral caretaker government. Under the stewardship of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has been pursuing an investment-friendly policy for the economic development of the country. Our achievements in different sectors of socio-economic life over the years have been possible largely due to the collective efforts of our countrymen at home and abroad.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad have made significant contributions to these achievements by projecting our image and promoted national goals abroad. Our foreign policy is based on the fundamental principles laid down by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which stipulates friendship to all and malice to none. Bangladesh's abiding commitment to the UN Charter, the OIC, NAM and the Commonwealth countries remain the cardinal principle of our foreign policy.

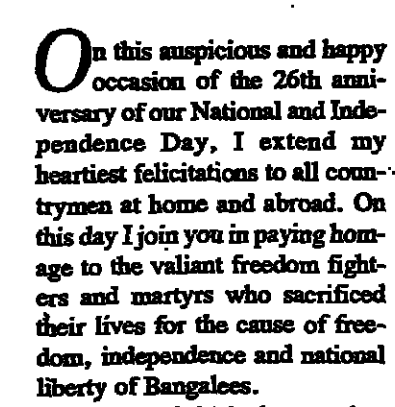
One of the major foreign policy objectives of the government is to promote and further strengthen relations with countries in the South Asian region. Soon after assuming office, initiatives were taken to resolve one of the major problems with our neighbors namely the Ganges Water sharing issue. The successful outcome of our endeavor in improving relations with our neighbors was clearly demonstrated when the present government signed the historic treaty on the sharing of Ganges Water with India.

We have been playing an im-

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AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE:

Bangladesh & Iran — Bonded by Brotherly Ties

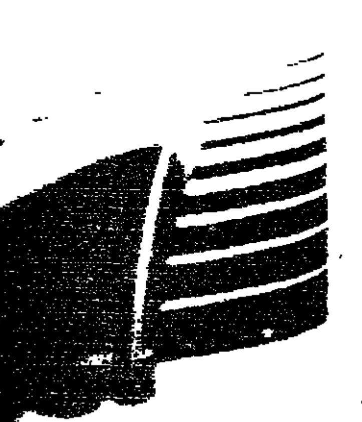


SYED MUAZZEM ALI
AMBASSADOR OF BANGLADESH

On the happy occasion of the 26th anniversary of the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh, I would like to record our deep appreciation and gratitude to His Excellency President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the government and people of Iran for the full support and cooperation which they have extended to this mission and the Bangladeshi people living in this brotherly country. I also take this opportunity to convey my cordial greetings to all Bangladeshi nationals residing in Iran. They are our "ambassadors of goodwill" and I am sure they will further enhance the image of our country through their hard work and sincerity.

I pay warm tributes to our valiant freedom fighters and pray for the salvation of the souls of the martyrs who laid down their lives for the independence of our country. On this historic occasion, the people of Bangladesh recall the contributions of those martyrs and take a fresh vow to realize the dream of the Father of the Nation — Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to build a happy and prosperous "Sonar Bangla" (Golden Bengal).

(Contd. on Pg. 12)



Achievements of the Government of Sheikh Hasina

*By Ranjit Kumar Biswas**

The June 12 general election of 1996 posted a milestone on a solid plinth in the history of the democracy of Bangladesh. It ignited the hopes for future, rekindled the achievements of the past and heralded a new age of democracy. But to arrive at the point the people of the country quagmired an arduous journey for more than a couple of decades of what sixteen years with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the apex.

The democratic government has taken a vow to carry the nation forward to translate the dream of the Father of the Nation and one of the greatest of statesmen of his time Bangabandhu Sheik Mujibur Rahman to build the Golden Bengal on the "Sonar Bangla" — a nation free from corruption and exploitation. Accordingly the government has laid special emphasis on poverty alleviation. Steps have been taken to establish rule of law. The government has taken various measures to infuse dynamism in all economic activities. A favorable atmosphere for private and foreign investment has been created and a package of attractive incentives has been offered to the local and foreign investors.

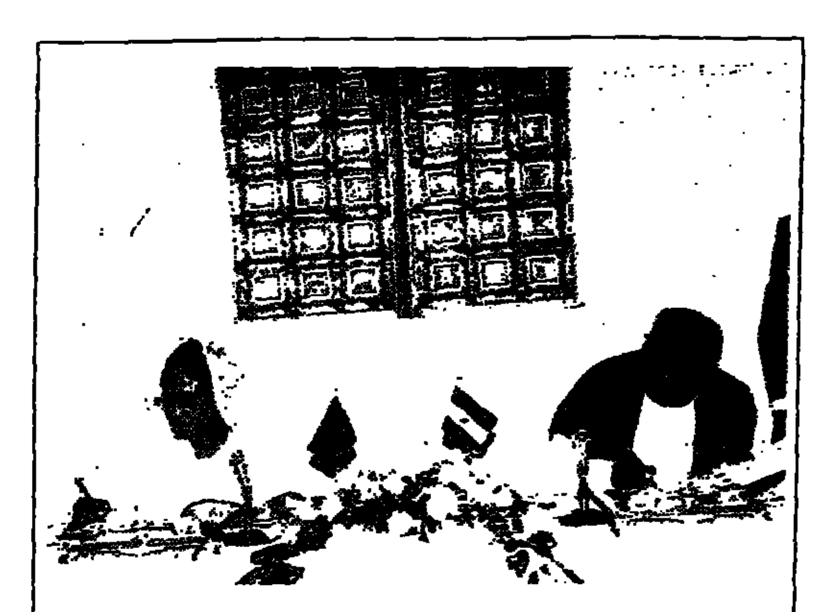
All efforts have been concentrated on the need to promote a structure of governance in line with the hopes and aspirations of the people of the country. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is trying to make a government of national consensus, an embodiment of national unity.

In line with its declaration of promoting the national wealth, the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina undertook, as part of its program, the arduous task of resolving the issues which had for long stood in the way of progress. An important issue that required quick and judicious resolution was the long standing irritant with India over sharing of the Ganges waters. The government of Bangladesh embarked on a move to reach a deal at the earliest and thus on December 12, 1996 a historic agreement was concluded. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda signed in New Delhi a thirty-year water treaty that was certainly a landmark in the history of South Asia. It was symptomatic of new beginning in relations between the two countries.

The Bangladesh Parliament repealed the inhuman Indemnity Ordinance that prevented so far the trial of the persons involved in the brutal killing of the father of the nation and his family members on August 15, 1975. Through the repeal of the Ordinance, the path has been made clear for the due process of law to take its course in the interest of justice.

The present government has also undertaken following measures:

1. Steps have been taken to ensure a complete separation of the judicial system from the executive organ of the government as envisaged in the constitution of the country.



Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina and Prime Minister of India H.D. Deva Gowda signing in New Delhi the historic 30 years treaty on the distribution of the Ganges water.

2. In order to strengthen the process of parliamentary democracy in the country, it has been decided that no minister will act as the chairman of any parliamentary committee.

3. In line with the practice of parliamentary democracy, the government, soon after taking over the office, amended the rules of business to ensure a balanced government and smooth functioning thereof.

4. The government is attaching high priority to the solution of the problem of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The national Committee has already held a number of meetings with the tribal leaders and both sides have already reached an amicable solution and the repatriation of the tribal people is imminent.

5. As part of the government's moves to restore law and order, the administration has embarked on a broad plan to bring all elements indulging in acts detrimental to the security of citizens within the bounds of the law.

6. In the area of the economy, the government has repeatedly stressed its commitment to policy that will attract greater foreign investments.

7. The endeavors of the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina remain the gears to the overall task of ensuring the welfare of the nation.

8. Besides, steps have been taken to project the correct national history and that of the great war of liberation. Decision has been taken to place the portrait of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in offices and courts. It has also been decided to mark the August 15 as the National Mourning day to pay homage to the Father of the Nation.

9. Arrangements have been made to run the local government by the people's representatives. Elections to union councils and Upazilas will be held soon.

10. The government is determined to curb terrorism in order to maintain law and order situation in the country. Directives have been issued to take legal measures against the terrorists irrespective of party affiliation.

11. The government has formed administrative reforms committee for resolving discrepancies and differences among the government services. Pay Commission has been constituted to give the recommendations on a new pay-scale.

12. 'Parliamentary Task Force' has been formed with the members both from the treasury and the opposition bench to strengthen the parliamentary activities with a view to making the Jatiya Sangsad, the center of all activities.

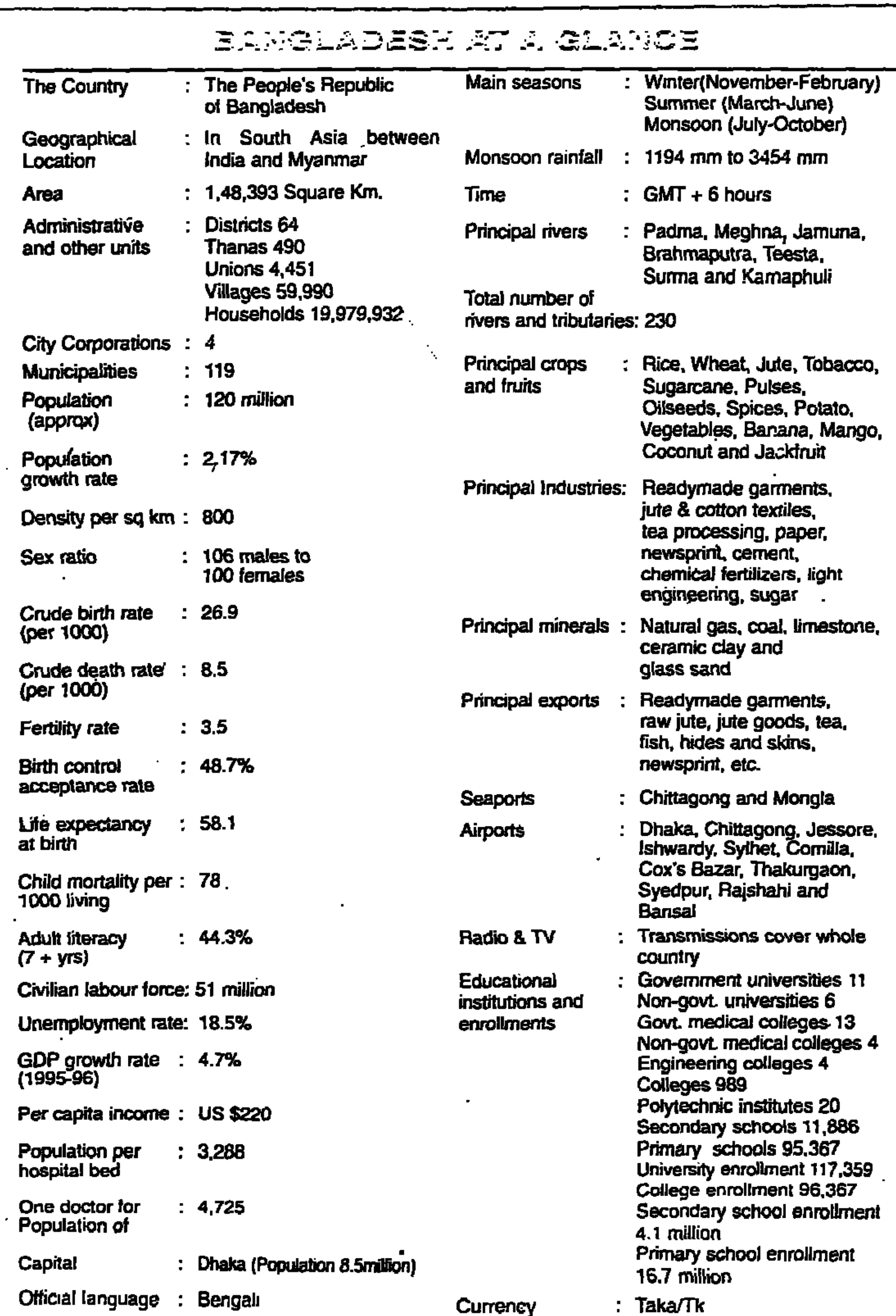
13. A committee has already been formed for giving autonomy to Bangladesh Betar (Radio) and Television. Government has made Betar and Television as the media of objective and neutral information flow.

14. In the budget, more emphasis have been given to maintain higher rate of growth through higher level of investment, increase capital investment, expand export, enhance employment and maintain an efficient and open market system.

15. For poverty alleviation and generation of employment opportunity for the youth, plan has been formulated to achieve 7 percent annual growth rate through checking its downward trend.

16. The area of Savar Export Processing Zone is being doubled. Decision has been taken to set up an export processing zone on an area of 288 hectares at Gazipur. The activities of the Board of Investment have also been geared up. The present government has signed memoran-

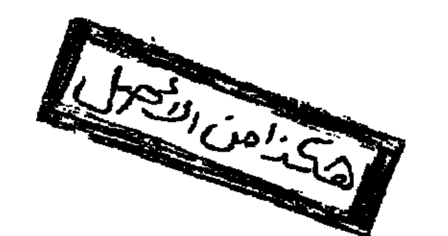
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BANGLADESH AT A GLANCE

The Country	: The People's Republic of Bangladesh
Geographical Location	: In South Asia between India and Myanmar
Area	: 1,48,393 Square Km.
Administrative and other units	: Districts 64 Thanas 490 Unions 4,451 Villages 59,990 Households 19,979,932
City Corporations	: 4
Municipalities	: 119
Population (approx)	: 120 million
Population growth rate	: 2,17%
Density per sq km	: 800
Sex ratio	: 106 males to 100 females
Crude birth rate (per 1000)	: 26.9
Crude death rate (per 1000)	: 8.5
Fertility rate	: 3.5
Birth control acceptance rate	: 48.7%
Life expectancy at birth	: 58.1
Child mortality per 1000 living	: 78
Adult literacy (7 + yrs)	: 44.3%
Civilian labour force	: 51 million
Unemployment rate	: 18.5%
GDP growth rate (1995-96)	: 4.7%
Per capita income	: US $220
Population per hospital bed	: 3,288
One doctor for Population of	: 4,725
Capital	: Dhaka (Population 8.5million)
Official language	: Bengali

Main seasons	: Winter(November-February) Summer (March-June) Monsoon (July-October)
Monsoon rainfall	: 1194 mm to 3454 mm
Time	: GMT + 6 hours
Principal rivers	: Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Teesta, Surma and Karnaphuli
Total number of rivers and tributaries	: 230
Principal crops and fruits	: Rice, Wheat, Jute, Tobacco, Sugarcane, Pulses, Oilseeds, Spices, Potato, Vegetables, Banana, Mango, Coconut and Jackfruit
Principal Industries	: Readymade garments, jute & cotton textiles, tea processing, paper, newsprint, cement, chemical fertilizers, light engineering, sugar
Principal minerals	: Natural gas, coal, limestone, ceramic clay and glass sand
Principal exports	: Readymade garments, raw jute, jute goods, tea, fish, hides and skins, newsprint, etc.
Seaports	: Chittagong and Mongla
Airports	: Dhaka, Chittagong, Jessore, Ishwardy, Sylhet, Comilla, Cox's Bazar, Thakurgaon, Syedpur, Rajshahi and Barisal
Radio & TV	: Transmissions cover whole country
Educational institutions and enrollments	: Government universities 11 Non-govt. universities 6 Govt. medical colleges 13 Non-govt. medical colleges 4 Engineering colleges 4 Colleges 989 Polytechnic institutes 20 Secondary schools 11,886 Primary schools 95.367 University enrollment 117,359 College enrollment 96,367 Secondary school enrollment 4.1 million Primary school enrollment 16.7 million
Currency	: Taka/Tk



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Bangladesh-Iran Relations

*By Musafa Kamal**

Bangladesh and Iran, two major Muslim nations, are closely linked by bonds of historic, traditional and cultural ties. Relations between the two brotherly Muslim countries can be described as brotherly and cordial. The saints and sages from both the countries have inspired each other and enriched the cultural links. Great poets of Bengal Rabindranath Tagore and Qazi Nazrul Islam, Lalan Sha and others drew inspiration from legendary Persian poets and Sufis namely Maulana Roomi, Hafez, Sheikh Saadi, Ferdousi, Omar Khayyam, and others. Persian, which was the court language of the Mughal Emperors in undivided India for 200 years also had a great role in bringing the two peoples closer and there are some eight thousand Farsi words in the Bengali language.

This deep and enduring link found new expressions when Bangladesh, soon after the independence, opened a resident Embassy in Tehran in 1974. Bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Iran have developed steadily since then. The dramatic changes brought about by the Islamic Revolution in 1979 influenced relations between the two Muslim countries substantially. The Islamic Revolutionary Government's attitude to Bangladesh has always been favorable due to Bangladesh's stand on the Revolution, Bangladesh's constructive role in the Security Council on the hostages issues, Bangladesh's active role as a member of the OIC Peace Committee on the Iran-Iraq war and thereafter, Bangladesh's participation in the UN peacekeeping forces which were deployed to monitor the Iran-Iraq cease-fire.



The President of Iran Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina in an exclusive meeting during the Special OIC Summit held in Islamabad on March 23, 1997.

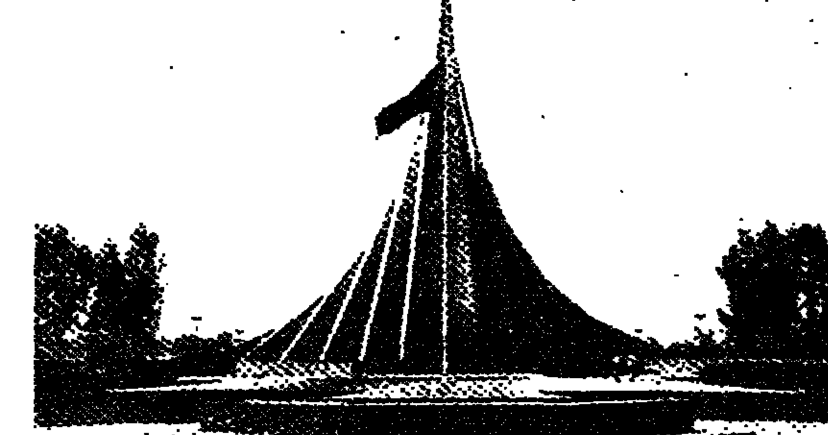
Iran's relations with Bangladesh are also based on the premise that Bangladesh is one of the largest Muslim countries and that as an active member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Group of 77, Bangladesh has always espoused the Third World causes. On many occasions Bangladesh and Iran cooperated with each other at the OIC, the NAM and the Group of 77. Iran, an active and founder member of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), took particular note of Bangladesh's initiative for establishing the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and both sides have expressed their interest in establishing some institutional link between these two regional bodies.

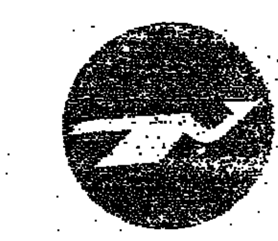
The Bangladesh-Iran relations reached new depths and dimension when President Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani undertook the historic state visit to Bangladesh in October 1995. This was the first ever visit by an Iranian Head of State to independent Bangladesh. The visit of President Rafsanjani was highly successful and discussions at the highest level brought the two countries and the leadership much closer. Eight bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between Bangladesh and Iran on cooperation in various sectors and one trilateral MOU among Bangladesh, Iran and Turkmenistan were concluded during the visit. This visit allowed the two sides to bring the economic contents of their friendship and cooperation at par with the excellent political relationship.

Bangladesh and Iran also have a Joint Economic Commission which works towards giving new vitality and dynamism to their economic ties embracing cooperation in economic, commercial, investment, agricultural, shipping, air links etc. The frequent bilateral visits at all levels have greatly increased and given a good momentum to boost the existing fraternal ties. Both Bangladesh and Iran are committed to cooperating and working with each other for further expansion and diversification of bilateral cooperation for their mutual benefit.

* The author is the Counselor (Political) in the Bangladesh Embassy and the views expressed are his own.







Bangladesh and Its Role in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the extraordinary summit of the OIC in Islamabad.

*By Tuhfa Zaman Ali **

On March 26 1971, Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan) declared its independence from the state of Pakistan and after a nine-month liberation struggle, emerged as a sovereign and independent state on December 16, 1971. Bangladesh was born under a unique set of circumstances and combination of factors — an international setting that was substantially favorable towards it, but formally not acknowledging it, and the determination of the Bangladeshi freedom fighters to liberate their land. The circumstances of its birth and its economic and geo-political situation to a great extent determine Bangladesh's foreign policy goals and objectives. Small powers possess a very narrow margin of safety. Realizing its imperatives, Bangladesh sought strength in numbers and a constant flow of external resources for the country. One of the primary objectives of the new government in power was to seek recognition as a sovereign and independent state and to become member of the international and regional organizations, one of which was the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) is a grouping of Islamic states and states with Muslim majority population. The attempts at bringing the Muslims of the world together for an Islamic conference may be traced back to 1898 when the first known assemblage of Muslim was held in Makkah. In September 1969 in the aftermath of the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, an Islamic summit was held in Rabat and the urgent need for the establishment of an Islamic organization was discussed. The foreign ministers were directed to discuss the formation of a permanent secretariat and to make regular contacts with the governments represented at that conference. Subsequently, the meeting of the Islamic foreign ministers held in Jeddah in March 1970 formally announced the formation of the Organization of Islamic Conference. The OIC has endured since then, and acts as an important forum where opinions can be expressed and solidarity demonstrated on matters of grave concern to the Muslim world.

Islam in Bangladesh

Eighty-five percent of the people of Bangladesh are Muslims

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Foreign Policy of Bangladesh

*By Majibur Rahman Bhuiyan**

"Friendship to all, malice to none" has been the bedrock of the foreign policy of Bangladesh since the very early days of her birth. She strives to further deepen and widen existing relations and cooperation with all countries not only bilaterally but also through her interaction in the multilateral and international fora. Bangladesh has deep and abiding commitment to her membership in the UN, the OIC, the Commonwealth and the NAM. As such, she plays an active, constructive and forward-looking role in all these organizations for the promotion of global peace for the progress and development of the people of Bangladesh as well as the advancement of humankind all over the world. She also pursues the principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of other states; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; desisting from posing threats to international peace and security; and equality and mutual benefit in adherence to the principles enshrined in the UN charter and the principles of non-alignment.

The active and constructive role played by Bangladesh to promote above principles and global peace has been recognized by the international community. She served in the UN Security Council in 1979-80, president of the UN General Assembly in 1986-87 and the chairman of Group of 77 in 1982-83. She was elected in the past as well as currently holding positions in the executive or governing bodies of various UN bodies. Consistent with the de-



Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mr. Abdus Samad Azad in a meeting with the Iranian President Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in Tehran in August 1996.

clared policy of peace, Bangladesh is playing an important role in the peace-keeping efforts of UN in different parts of the world. She is one of the major troops-contributing countries for the UN peacekeeping operations.

Bangladesh gives special importance to strengthening relations with all the neighbors, particularly our immediate neighbors both bilaterally and through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Some of the outstanding problems with the immediate neighbors (Tin Bigha corridor and sharing of the Ganges water with India and return of Myanmarese refugees in Bangladesh) have been resolved through negotiations in the spirit of amicability and mutual understanding. Bangladesh took the initiative to launch a regional forum for co-operation in South Asia for the benefit of the people in the region. The first SAARC summit which formally launched the forum was held in Dhaka. SAARC has made significant progress in various fields of technical and economic cooperation among the member states and some of them have been institutionalized. Bangladesh emphasizes on programs and activities which are geared to poverty alleviation in the region as a whole and to expanding and lending new dynamism to intra-SAARC trade through SAPIA. Recently, Bang-

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Ambassador's Message

der the aegis of the SAARC.

The people of Bangladesh and Iran have similar aspirations and our views on all major international political and economic issues are nearly identical. We are also committed to work for collective self-reliance of the developing countries, especially the Muslim countries. I seek Allah's help and blessings in our endeavors for further development of all-round cooperation between our two brotherly countries.

Long live
Bangladesh-Iran
Friendship

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MANPOWER ....

It is gratifying to note that a large number of teachers, doctors, engineers, accountants and other professionals of Bangladesh are currently working in various institutions and projects in America, Europe and Africa. Moreover, many technicians and management professionals are working in various international organization in the highly technical and managerial positions. Bangladesh is also known to have been possessing a good number of builders and planners. Within the country nowadays high rise buildings, roads and bridges have been designed by Bangladeshi engineers and technicians and built under their supervision.

At present there are many friendly foreign countries who are hiring manpower from Bangladesh. Bangladeshis, being predominantly Muslim, have shown their keen interest to work in various Muslim countries. The Bangladesh workforce is known for their discipline, devotion to duty, hard work, technical know-how, loyalty and obedience to the employer. Consequently the demand for Bangladeshi manpower has increased and the number of expatriates in the Persian Gulf alone has more than doubled in the last five years. In Iran, the Bangladeshi doctors, engineers, industrial workers, teachers, marine engineers and people in various professional fields have enhanced the image of the country through their hard work and dedication.

In pursuance of the government policy to promote overseas employment of Bangladeshi manpower, the following institutional arrangements have been made for recruitment of Bangladeshi manpower:

1. Recruitment Through the Government

The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) under the Ministry of Labor and Manpower is responsible for processing of all demands from foreign employers. In fact, the BMET has been established with the specific purpose of meeting the manpower requirement of friendly foreign countries through human resource development and utilization of manpower.

2. Recruitment Through Public Limited Company

Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd. (BOESL) is a public limited company which is also responsible for procuring and processing of demands from foreign employers.

3. Private Recruiting Agencies

There are licensed recruiting agencies in the private sector for procuring and processing of demands from foreign employers. However, they are to obtain prior permission from the government for recruitment and to take emigration clearance for the workers after recruitment.

4. Recruitment Through Individual Offer

The workers are also allowed to make direct contact with the overseas employers to obtain the employment contracts but the terms and conditions are examined by the BMET to protect their rights.

Besides medical colleges, general and engineering universities and colleges, there are 51 vocational training institutes (VTI), 11 specialized technical training centers (TTC) and one institute of marine technology (BIMT) which impart practical training through industrial attachment apprenticeship and on the job training. The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) is the Secretariat of the National Council for Skill Development and Training (NCSDT) established for the purpose of standardization, certification and trade testing of the skilled and semi-skilled workers emerging from various government and private training institutes. The main thrust of the skill development program is on strengthening and consolidation of the existing training network, better capacity utilization and improved quality of training on the basis of available information on skill needs of the own economy as well as foreign countries' economy.

Manpower is one of the major national resources of Bangladesh and the country earns a major portion of its foreign exchange from remittances sent by its expatriates working abroad. Fortunately Bangladesh is turning her manpower to suit the needs of a modern economy. There are a good number of friendly foreign countries which need this manpower. Consequently Bangladesh has been considered as one of the major manpower exporting countries and her expatriate population includes nuclear scientists to ordinary industrial workers.

* The author is First Secretary in the Bangladesh Embassy in Tehran. The views expressed are his own.

(Contd. from Pg. 6)

BANGLADESH TOWARDS....

- ✓ Develop appropriate institutional mechanism to increase employment, particularly in rural areas, expand literacy, primary health care, basic shelter and housing facilities and encourage NGO's participation in them.

Policy Reforms

- ✓ Make further necessary reforms in financial sector to reduce the scale of non performing loans and restore capital adequacy norms to standard international level.
- ✓ Provide an efficient network of banking services for the rural populace.
- ✓ Undertake participatory local level planning, whereby people at the grassroots, especially in rural areas, have the opportunity to provide their inputs into the future development process of the country, strengthen the local government institutions through decentralization of power.
- ✓ Put in place sound commercial and regulatory laws, a highly competitive financial and banking system, an efficient and transparent government machinery and other related measures to help sustain a market economy that would in turn boost private sector investment and development.

Macroeconomic Policy Environment

The commitment to development to be pursued in a macroeconomic policy environment with the following salient features.

- ✓ Achieving macroeconomic stability through prudent fiscal and monetary management, keeping inflationary pressure under check, and the external balance and external debt within affordable limits of the economy's earning capacity;
- ✓ Along with maintaining public expenditure control, improve productivity, bring efficiency in public expenditures, and develop resources and responsibilities of the local bodies.
- ✓ Continue to pursue economic reforms in trade, industry and infrastructure to improve competitiveness of domestic private industry. Further reduction in trade controls, eradication or rationalization of tariff is expected to create an open market which will induce the local and foreign investments.
- ✓ Growth to be efficient and sustainable in the medium and long term conserve and improve rather than deplete natural resource base. The government is committed towards improvement of environment at national and international levels.

Strategy

In the forthcoming years, public expenditure and domestic resource mobilization will have to

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(Contd. from Pg. 13)

BANGLADESH TOWARDS....

be planned in the context of the overall macroeconomic policy environment. Considering the persistent losses sustained by the state owned enterprises (SOEs) and requiring substantial state subsidies, these are to be made profitable through necessary structural reforms.

Apart from being involved in the provision of public goods and services, the state is expected to step in only to correct market failures rather than play any role of direct control.

Future lies in the development of our human resources — as such, the policy emphasis will be to remove inhibiting regulations and controls that repress private enterprise and entrepreneurship, thereby creating favorable condition for development of the latent forces through the benefit of competition and innovation. Private sector investments and economic activity will be driven by signals generated through pronouncements regarding the nature of fiscal, monetary, trade and exchange rate policies. The magnitude and direction of the public sector investments in physical and economic infrastructure will be guided by development goals set by government. Government policy of decontrol, deregulation, legal or other reforms is expected to induce private entrepreneurs to derive the benefits of the market mechanism through competition and efficiency.

The domestic resource mobilization effort for the future and consequent resource availability will therefore need to consider the following key elements in the management of the economy:

- ✓ Gradual transformation of the economy into a market driven system with private sector leadership in the major sectors of the economy and in the fast growing tertiary sector.
- ✓ Macroeconomic stability will have to be sustained, which if successful, will provide a stable overall economic environment for private sector investment and business activity.
- ✓ In view of the declining aid availability increasingly more domestic resources will be needed to finance the development expenditures requiring commensurate domestic mobilization effort;

at the same time, increased amount of foreign direct and portfolio investments are expected in independent and joint ventures to bring about a quantum leap in private sector led growth.

Further improvements are expected in the public resource management which will bring down the level of fiscal deficit, allow growing public expenditure on poverty alleviation, health, education, transport and communication, power and energy and create appropriate incentives for promotion of domestic savings and domestic resource mobilization through rationalized tax and non tax structures and with greater transparency and efficiency; and improvement in public debt management.

Conclusion

The basic goals of our development as economic growth, self reliance and modernization are reiterated. The main objective of economic policies and reforms would be the achievement of sustained improvement in the standard of living of the people. Accelerated economic growth, increased productivity and incomes, economic and social justice are possible answers to a difficult task as that of alleviation of poverty. Macroeconomics development should be supported by such a structural adjustment that will bring economy in the use of resources and efficiency in delivery of public services.

Let the twenty first century begin with a pledge for good governance with accountability and transparency and all prospects for social and economic development.

Source: Bangladesh Economic Review, 1996

Economic Commitments of the Newly Elected Government of Bangladesh

Free Market Economy:

Follow free market economic policies and accelerate economic reforms. Give all out support and incentives to private sector. Improve efficiency and productivity of public sector enterprises so as to make them profitable.

Agriculture:

Ensure at fair prices, supply of fertilizer, irrigation equipment and other inputs and credit for the peasants and provide subsidies, if necessary.

Undertake land reform and land management program and distribute 'Khas lands' (state-owned land) among landless. Modernize fish culture, poultry livestock rearing; Extensive tree planting and afforestation for environmental balance.

Industries:

Simplification of laws relating to industrialization and creating of opportunities for uniform development of industries at distract and Thana level.

Modernization of textiles and priority for export oriented industries.

Expansion of small and cottage and labor intensive industries, creation of opportunities for the unemployed youth. No industrial, financial or commercial units under private ownership will be nationalized.

Trade:

Liberalization of trade and improvement in balance of payments.

Labor Policy:

Undertake effective new labor policy on the basis of tripartite negotiations.

Link wages with productivity.

Quick disposal of industrial disputes according to international labor convention.

Stop child labor and provide workers with education, healthcare and better working facilities.

Educational and Human Resources:

Ensure proper education and develop human resources.

Change education system in line with Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Education Commission Report.

Establish primary school in each Thana (sub-district). Provide technical and vocational training at each Thana.

Modernize religious and Madrasah education system.

Women and Child Development:

Undertake appropriate policies for establishing equal rights for women in all spheres and bring women in the mainstream of development.

Accord high priority to expansion of female education and take up projects for improving the condition of the disadvantaged.

Health and Family Planning:

Health for all.

Extension of health care facilities to the poor and the distressed.

Appropriate steps for modernization of indigenous health care system.

Appropriate steps for effective family planning.

Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare:

Take appropriate steps for transforming poor and unemployed people into productive and self reliant human resources.

Take appropriate steps for rehabilitation of destitutes and slum dwellers.

Physical Infrastructure:

Accord priority to infrastructural development, expansion and modernization of rails, roads, highways, telecommunications and ports.

Extension of rural electricity throughout the country in next ten years.

Development of water resources.

Exploration of oil, gas, coal and other natural resources.

Transparency and Accountability:

Ensure law and order

Ensure transparency and accountability of the government.

Strengthen local government bodies through decentralization of power.



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(Contd. from Pg. 7)

BANGLADESH GROWS....

Malta, Canada, U.S.A., Ireland, Spain, Kenya, Sudan, Australia, New Zealand, India, Kuwait, Jordan, Belgium, Bahrain Nepal.

That's Bangladesh Tea

Full-bodied, tasty, strong-liquored and rich-colored. That's Bangladesh Tea, grown on the lush-green slopes of the Surma Valley, country's famed tea-growing areas. With the introduction of clonal teas (BT Series) a touch of pleasant flavor is acclaimed worldwide.

Bangladesh produces more 52 million kg. with

a) CTC 98.5%

b) Orthodox 0.5%

c) Green Tea 1.0%
and exports about 35 million kg.

To Get Full Goodness Out of Bangladesh Tea

1. Take fresh water in a kettle and heat till it boils.

2. Remove the kettle from fire as soon as the water is boiled.

3. Rinse the tea pot with boiled water and add quickly one tea spoonful of tea for each cup and one extra tea spoonful for the tea pot.

4. Quickly pour boiled water from the kettle as per requirement.

5. Wait for 5 minutes and then pour liquid tea into cup. Add milk and sugar according to preference.

6. Now stir and then sip.

7. Remember, to get the flavor of the tea always you will have to use fresh boiled water.

For Bangladesh, the production of tea that delights the soul is an age-old tradition.

Strong liquored, Rich colored
THAT'S BANGLADESH TEA

(Contd. from Pg. 9)

GRAMEEN....

Government's option was 25% while the remaining 75% would be subscribed by the borrowers.

The Bank is run by a thirteen member Board of Directors of whom nine members are elected by the landless borrowers from among themselves. The Bank's loanees are landless men and women, who must form groups of five, in order to receive loans which are given without any type of collateral to be used for any income generating economy. But before loans are given to the eligible borrowers, they have to undergo an intensive training for the duration of one to two weeks about the philosophy of Grameen Bank and its rules and procedures as well as to write their own name. Each group elects its own Chairman and Secretary who organize the meeting where the attendance of all the members is compulsory. Several members in the same village are federated into a "center" and from among the chairmen of the groups are elected the Center Chief" and the "Deputy Center Chief." Their duties include the conducting of the weekly meetings of the center, recommending loan proposals, supervising loan activities and assisting Bank Workers in their work.

The Grameen Bank (GB) members create a number of savings accounts. These include the Group Fund, the Childrens Welfare Fund, Special Savings and Personal Savings accounts of some borrowers. The total amount of savings in some of these funds (in Taka) upto October 1996 were: Group Fund Taka 4973.96 million (U.S.$ 132.79 million) and balance of total savings, excluding Group Fund, Tk. 693.34 million (U.S.$17.78 million).

The structure of the bank is highly decentralized. The bank has 14 zonal offices. Each area office supervises around 10-15 branches. The number of area offices currently in operation is 110. The number of GB branch offices upto January 1997 was 1079. The number of villages that have been reached is 36,551. These villages are located in more than 50 districts out of a total of 64.

The Bank serves over two million borrowers. 94.07% of them are women, as compared to only 46% in December 1983. This is the result of a conscious policy on the part of the Bank's management who have observed that women tend to be more responsible and scrupulous about the repayment of their loans than their male counterparts. In addition, it has been noted that when women are the loan recipients, the benefits resulting from additional income are usually spread more evenly over the household as a whole i.e. her husband and the children also receive a major part of the benefits accruing from the loan utilization.

The Grameen Bank disbursed a total of Taka 68663.32 million (U.S.$ 183636.30 million) as loans until October 1996. Average rate of recovery of GB loans is 98%. This has overwhelmingly proved that poor people are indeed bankable and that they in fact, are better customers than their richer counterparts. The only condition reguired to bring them into a viable banking system is an appropriate credit delivery recovery mechanism.

The Grameen Bank members have taken loan for over 500 different activities for which they already possessed the necessary skills. The average loan size is about 2000 taka. Grameen Bank currently disburses around U.S.$26 million in loans per month. Generally the biggest loan for an individual does not exceed Tk. 50,000/00 but members can jointly take larger loans for collective enterprises such as the purchase of shallow and deep tubewells, rice and oil mills, the leasing of markets, ponds and land, the purchase of power tillers, wheat threshers etc.

The Bank has also introduced housing loans for the poor as it was felt that the ownership of a shelter provides poor people with a degree of confidence, a sense of dignity and a conviction that they can improve their lives. In fact, for many members, their house is also their workplace. Under this scheme, 325,288 such houses have been constructed till October 1996, with a total disbursement of about Tk. 5489.70 million (U.S.$ 147.28 million). Along-with economic activities, the Grameen Bank also has a strong social component to its work. The Bank members are encouraged to pay attention to their health and nutritional needs in addition to their socio-economic situations.

Lately, the Grameen Family Company, a sister organization of Grameen Bank, has also generated tremendous interest with the launching of some new profit and non-profit earning projects. The profit earning projects are: (i) Grameen Cybernet, (ii) Grameen Phone (mobile), (iii) Grameen Ganashastha (rural community health) and (iv) Grameen Textiles. The non-profit projects are: (i) Grameen Agriculture, (ii) Grameen Fisheries, (iii) Grameen Trust (for logistic and loan support to more than 50 countries following the GB formula), (iv) Grameen Uddyog, (v) Grameen Telecom, (vi) Grameen Communications, (vii) Grameen Fund, (viii) Grameen Shamogri (products for export), (ix) Grameen Health, (x) Grameen Kalyan (Welfare), and finally, (xi) Grameen Shokti (solar energy).

The Grameen bank in Bangladesh has successfully illustrated the point that the rural landless, poor women work hard if they are given a chance, because they are concerned about their children and their future. The bank has an all-Bangladeshi staff of about 12,000 people at all levels. An important part of the Bank's success is due to the dedication and hard work of its workers.

The recently held Micro-credit Summit in Washington D.C. recognized the immense contributions made by the Grameen Bank in the alleviation of rural poverty. The Grameen Bank is now globally acclaimed as one of the most successful Micro credit Scheme in the world today. That day is not too far when Dr. Yunus' dream of a more human world will be realized.

The Bangladesh Ready-Made Garments Industry: Present Status and Future Prospects

By
*Faisal Ahmed Choudhury**

The readymade garments (RMG) industry is one of Bangladesh's success stories. From a humble beginning, it witnessed spectacular growth within a short span of about fifteen years. It currently has the enviable position of being the seventh largest RMG exporter to the USA, tenth largest to the European Union countries and ninth largest to Canada. Like many developing countries in the past, Bangladesh was encouraged in the late seventies into the garments industry and exporting by clothing industries in South Korea and Hong Kong. International buyers were also looking for new potential supply sources like Bangladesh in order to avoid problems caused by quota restrictions on traditional suppliers. In Bangladesh, capital requirement for setting up apparel manufacturing units was relatively low compared to other industrial sectors. Moderate sized units could hire premises for installation of their machinery and go into production within a period of four to six months. Because of low gestation period and quick turnover, bank financing was within easy reach. Cheap and highly trainable workforce was available. All these factors created a spontaneous spree for investment in Bangladesh.

The RMG sector (both woven and knit) in Bangladesh is characterized by small and medium-sized privately-owned enterprises. The industry attained phenomenal growth over the past fifteen years. While only 21 units operating in 1981 generated export earnings amounting to U.S.$3.5 million, the sector currently comprises roughly 2,800 units accounting for exports with U.S.$2547.13 million by the year end of 1995-96. The sector has grown at an average annual rate of 66.50% over the past 15 years. The RMG sector has ushered in positive social transformation by creating employment opportunities for more than one million people, most of whom are women. Bangladesh exports are principally in the clothing sector and most of the fabric used are imported. Of the developed countries which were signatories to the Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA), Japan as well as the member states of the European Union have extended to Bangladesh GSP (Generalized System of Preference) facilities to help it improve its productivity and enhance its export earnings. This has always been a factor in making Bangladesh products competitive.


A garments factory

The Uruguay Round Agreement (URA) marks the beginning of a new phase in international economic relations. There is now a growing realization that the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC), which forms an integral part of the URA, poses not only challenges, but also promises a whole lot of opportunities. It will be useful to see the effects of the MFA phase-out on the Bangladesh RMG sector in the short as well as the long term. The short term effects relate to the transition period of ten years (January 1995 to December 31, 2004) under the ATC, when the MFA restrictions are expected to be eliminated by the integration process. The long term effects would become perceptible when the quotas are finally removed (from January 1, 2005) and trading takes place in a free market situation.

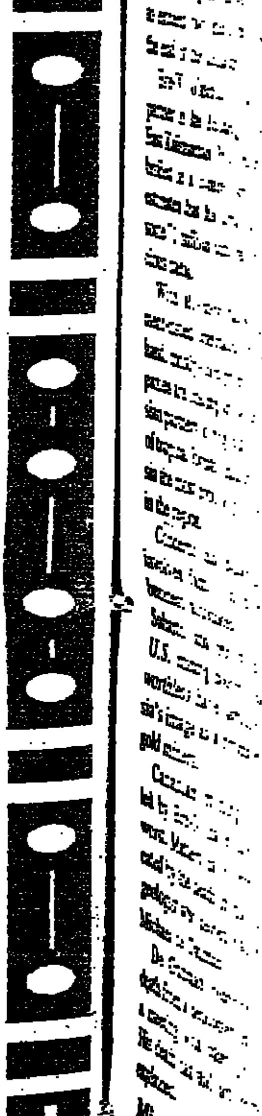
The existing production capacity of domestic fabrics suitable for the export-oriented RMG sector presently meets only 5% requirements of the woven and 41% of the knit garments sectors. While it is projected that Bangladesh will be self-sufficient in respect of knit fabrics by 2005, the woven sector will continue to remain dependent upon imported fabrics during the years following the end of the transition period. In the area of accessories, considerable investments have already taken place. More are in the pipeline. Hopefully, the accessories industries will be able to meet most of the requirements of the RMG sector by the year 2005. Unless Bangladeshi exporters can cut down delivery time by using local fabrics, they risk losing out some of their market share to their competitors in South East Asia, some of whom have not only their own cotton, but have also built up adequate backward linkage industries.

The Bangladesh government and the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) are fully aware of the changing realities of the unfolding global market place. They are crafting and implementing forward-looking strategies and policy responses in order to face the new challenges in a positive and pragmatic fashion. The Bangladesh government attaches high priority to the textile sector and has declared the textile industry as a "thrust sector" to build up country's backward linkage industries in the fabric and accessories areas. Serious efforts are already underway to attract foreign investment, in addition to the ongoing measures to rehabilitate and upgrade the quality of the existing textile units. To overcome the present constraints regarding availability of cotton, the Government of Bangladesh is not only encouraging local production, but also helping the sector by reducing the import tariff of raw cotton at zero level.

The BGMEA, in cooperation with Bangladesh Government as well as ILO and UNICEF has taken adequate measures to handle effectively the child labor issue to the satisfaction of the importing countries.

The RMG industry in Bangladesh today is an organized, thriving and vibrant sector. Enough confidence has developed amongst the entrepreneurs to march steadily forward and face squarely the challenges of the global market place. The Bangladesh Government, on its part, is continuing its efforts to move fast with forward-looking export expansion strategies. ☐

* The author is the Vice Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau





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Indian Shares Slip After Government Vote Defeat

BOMBAY — Indian shares fell on Saturday as bickering politicians tried to stitch together a new coalition and avert an early election after the United Front government was defeated in a confidence vote overnight, brokers said.

Investors were jittery at the beginning of a special Saturday trading session arranged to give them a chance to react to Friday's vote.

Brokers said the market had largely discounted the government's defeat and there was no panic selling.

The benchmark Bombay stock exchange's top-30 share index closed 44.01 points, or 1.21%, lower at 3,589.72.

The market derived some comfort from hopes that a widely welcomed budget would be approved and a new coalition government would take over.

The Congress Party said it will back the United Front to form a new coalition provided it changed its leader, defeated Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda.

Prashant Purker, head of institutional sales at Peregrine capital India, said the market was largely discounting the possibility that the budget will be passed and that a new coalition will be formed.

Congress Party Chief Sitaram Kesri told Reuters in New Delhi that his party's top priority was to avoid elections after Deve Gowda's minority government lost the confidence vote.

Analysts saw a glimmer of hope for the markets if elections were avoided.

Tushar Sarda, president and chief executive at Daewoo securities said he foresaw a good chance of Congress and the United Front together forming a government, from which the parties to the left of the outgoing coalition would drop out.

The left parties were primarily opposed to liberalization and without them the process of reform will move at a much faster pace, he said.

It is a hope-driven market, said Ramakrishna Iyer, equity salesman at brokerage Ask-Raymond James securities India Ltd.

The market will stay in trading range of 100 points.

There's across-the-board support for the budget, Iyer said. It will rejuvenate the markets if it's passed without significant changes.

He said if the budget was cleared the market was likely trade between 3,600-3,900 from its current 3,300-3,600 range.

The Lower House of Parliament will debate the budget on April 21 to 23. (Reuter)

Russia and World Bank Sign Agreement on Sea Launch Financing

MOSCOW — Russia and the World Bank have signed a preliminary financing plan for the international sea launch rocket project, the Interfax news service reported Saturday.

Sea launch, led by the Boeing Co., is a project to launch commercial rockets from floating platforms in the Pacific Ocean.

According to Interfax, Russian Economics Minister Yakov Urinson signed a memorandum under which the World Bank would guarantee $100 million in loans to Russia's Energia Co. from international banks.

First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais said the guarantee "is a quality certificate for the investment situation in Russia in general, and this project in particular."

Chubais said the project, estimated to be worth up to $1 billion, might create 30,000 new jobs at Russia's science-oriented enterprises, Interfax reported.

Energia is to build the upper stage of the sea launch rockets.

Two Ukrainian companies would build the lower stages, and the entire project would be managed by Boeing Commercial Space Co.

Already, Hughes Space and Communications International Inc. has ordered 10 satellite launches over five years, beginning in 1998, and space systems-loral has contracted for five satellite launches at the turn of the century. (AP)

Asian Currencies Contain Greenback Advance Despite Yen Slide

SINGAPORE — Most Asian currencies should remain well-bid against the U.S. dollar in the near term despite the greenback's persistent surge against the yen, foreign exchange analysts say.

In the past week alone, the U.S. dollar rose by about two percent to end at 126.02 yen during Asian trading on Friday after scalping the 127-level a day earlier for the first time since August 1992.

The greenback has risen more than nine percent since the beginning of this year, and has increased by 17.8% against the yen since last August amid Japan's struggling economy, frail stock market and cheap funds.

But the U.S. dollar was unable to capitalize on its yen strength during the past week to post across-the-board increases against the other regional currencies, analysts said.

"To put it simply, most of the other Asian economies enjoy better economic fundamentals than Japan at the present moment," said Andy Tan, general manager of U.S. Finance House MMS International in Singapore.

"And that will provide the regional currencies with the shield against broader dollar strength," Tan told AFP.

Dealers said the greenback during the past week had appreciated by about 0.1% against the Singapore dollar, Indonesian rupiah, South Korean won and Philippine peso, 0.4% against the Thai baht and 0.8% against the Malaysian ringgit.

Jimmy Koh, regional economist with British research house I. D. E. A. here, predicted that the U.S. dollar could soar to 135 yen based on Japan's "fragile" economic fundamentals.

"Fundamentals show there are buyers for the dollar and we don't rule out the dollar roaring to 130-135 yen in the medium- to long-term," Koh said.

He said Japanese funds, put off by low interest rates at home, would step up purchases of U.S. treasuries to cash in on wide interest-rate differentials.

"This will fuel bigger demand for the dollar against the yen," Koh said.

Similarly, Japanese funds wishing to diversify their investments would buy into other Asian currencies, especially the Malaysian ringgit and the Indonesian rupiah and perhaps the Thai baht, to benefit from better yields, he added.

"At the same time, Japanese firms are extending their wings into the region as part of a hollowing out of the Japanese manufacturing base," he noted.

Sim Moh Siong, economist with Citibank in Singapore, said: "Unless the U.S. dollar rallies sharply against the yen, most of the Asian currencies will remain stable against the dollar."

He said that the Malaysian ringgit, despite coming under selling pressure the past week, would remain strong against the U.S. dollar on growing prospects of firmer interest rates to curb inflationary pressures.

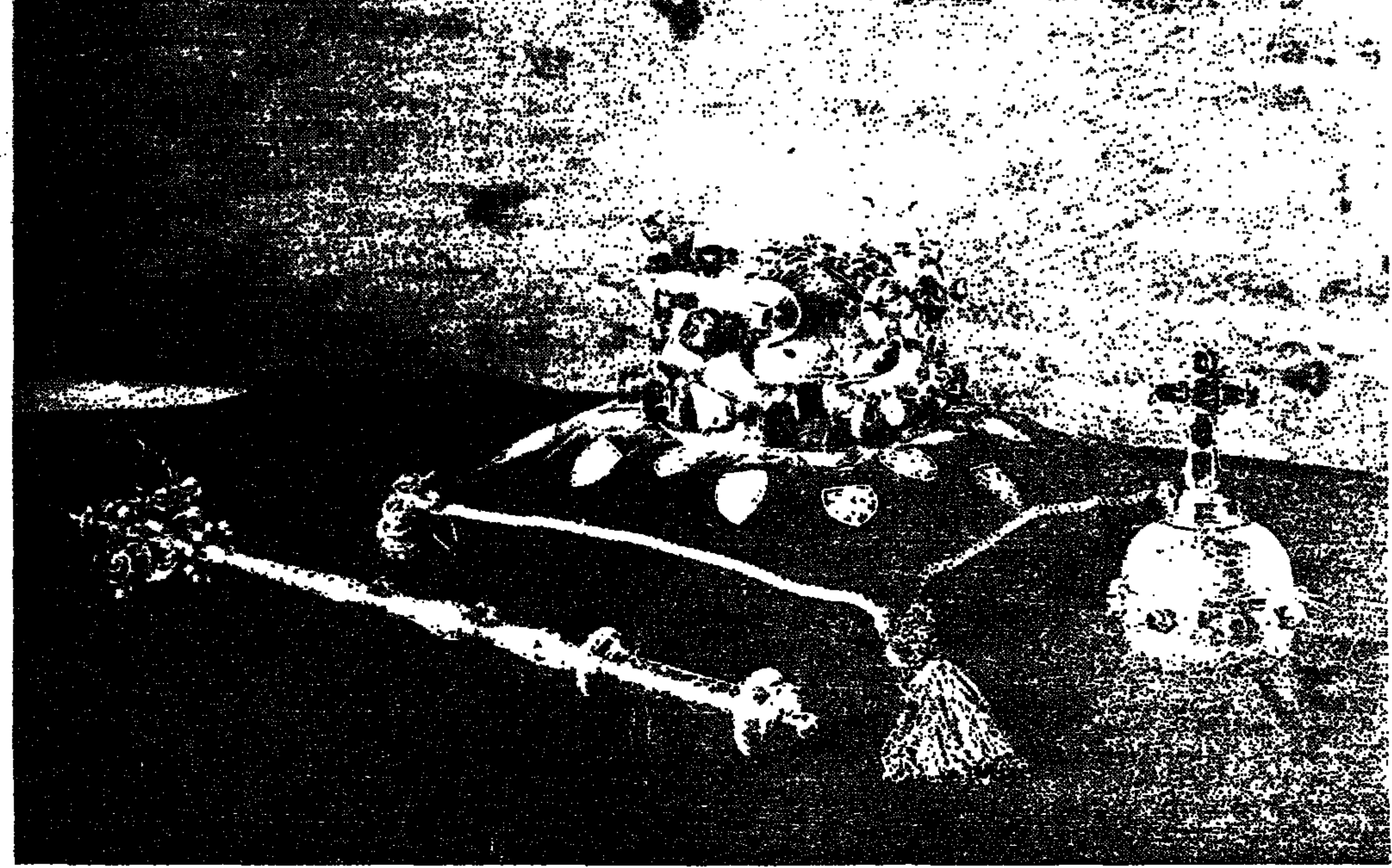
Even the recently-battered South Korean won should resist U.S. dollar pressure because of increasing market confidence over determined government moves to put the economy in order, Sim said.

Despite political worries, Sim said the Indonesian rupiah remained bullish because of expected tighter liquidity ahead.

For the Philippine peso, he said unless interest rates rose from the current below-double-digit level, "we should probably see further currency weakness" while the Thai baht remained relatively unscathed by the downgrading of bonds by Moody's rating agency.

The Singapore dollar also remained steady against the U.S. dollar despite the weak industrial production figures released on Thursday. (AFP)

Indonesia Still Good for Gold



WINURI, Indonesia — Although the Busang Saga has focused attention on Indonesia's vast potential for gold on Borneo Island, prospectors are quietly pegging claims in other jungle provinces of Indonesia as well.

Even without Busang, Indonesia's annual gold output is forecast to exceed two million ounces by the end of the decade.

Bre-X Minerals Ltd, leading partner in the Busang property in East Kalimantan Province, is embroiled in a controversy over its estimates that the deposit contains some 71 million ounces of the precious metal.

With all-important government-issued contracts of work in hand, mostly-foreign mining companies are linking up with Indonesian partners to peg out vast tracts of tropical forests, making Indonesia the most prolific gold producer in the region.

Concerns that Busang, which involves family members and business associates of President Suharto, and one of the largest U.S. mining houses, may prove worthless have tarnished Indonesia's image as a promised land for gold miners.

Canadian mining companies led by Bre-X have suffered the worst. Matters have been complicated by the death in march of the geologist who helped find Busang, Michael de Guzman.

De Guzman plunged to his death from a helicopter en route to a meeting with other geologists. His death has still not been fully explained.

Miners Under Pressure

Bre-X has been under pressure since tests by its proposed 15% partner freeport-McMoran Copper Gold Inc. On the Busang gold property indicated the deposit may contain insignificant amounts of gold.

Freeport also noted visual differences between its gold samples and Bre-X's samples.

The announcement prompted panic selling of Bre-X shares last month, lopping nearly C3 billion ($2.2 billion) from the company's stock market value.

In all, analysts estimate some $9 billion in Canadian capital investment for exploration has been forfeited in the fall-out from Busang.

Australian miners also have felt the brunt of investors seeking to punish mining companies in Indonesia.

Laverton Gold Nl, Aurora gold Ltd and other listed Australian miners saw their stock fall after freeport went public with its doubts on Busang.

But whether or not Busang stands as a major deposit, there is little doubt that more gold exists in Indonesia.

We've got a mine and that's the big difference from Busang, said John Stratton, chairman of Consolidated Goldfields Ltd.

A Hard Place to Work

Mining executives also stress that operating in Indonesia has always presented special problems.

This is real tiger country, Stratton said.

The extreme tropical conditions cause plant equipment to wear out faster and, by midday, stifling heat can take its toll on worker productivity.

Savvy local people, such as the Dayaks of East Kalimantan, negotiate compensation for revenues from lands otherwise capable of growing rubber, coconuts, nutmeg, cloves and other Indonesian agricultural staples, whether or not they have ever been farmed.

The locals seem to want compensation for just about everything that goes on, said one mining executive.

Independent miners inhabit the landscape of almost every mining province, robbing companies of gold on their properties and causing environmental headaches.

Government-trained units of armed soldiers patrol most mine sites but their leaders frequently lack the political will to remove the squatters.

Still the active and fossil volcanic arcs of minerals dating back to the mid-tertiary period and hosting major centers of gold and silver still make Indonesia a prospector's dream, say geologists.

Laverton Gold Nl, in January started mining the Rawas lode in the region of the Barisan mountains of Sumatra, where the company believes at least 900,000 ounces of gold are embedded in ore bodies.

We see very strong potential for Rawas and the region, said Rony Rrevisan, chairman of Laverton.

Consolidated Gold and Laverton are awaiting shareholder approval to merge.

Another mining house, Mekatharra Minerals Ltd, is eyeing start-up of its way Linngo find later this year, which it says holds 187,000 ounces of gold and silver.

An Unlikely Gold Find

On Sulawesi island, Newmont Mining Corp recently began mining at its Mesel project, while the Toku Tindung mine several hundred kilometers north is poised to come on stream later this year.

Toku Tindung, a 2,800 sq km property located at Winuri, 35 km northeast of the north Sulawesi capital Manado, was discovered by intrepid geologists with little modern equipment trekking the local stream beds and assessing the volcanic ash that coats much of the tropical ground of the region.

Toku Tindung was not discovered with the type of tools you typically come up here with, said the mine's manager, Stuart Tuckey of Aurora gold Ltd.

Abundant vegetation around the deposit makes it difficult to identify any tell-tale outcroppings and conventional stream samplings proved useless, leaving the geologists to depend on their own observations, Tuckey said.

Although the gold took years to find, the nature of the deposit may prove to be a blessing of sorts, Tuckey said.

No one here has seen any visible gold, Tuckey said. Maybe that's what keeps the illegals away.

(Reuter)

Human Prey Adapt to Survive Kidnapping

MANILA — A Taiwanese businessman driving in Manila one night had a flat tyre, but he didn't dare stop and drove home with the wheel thumping the pavement.

"Buying a new tyre is much, much cheaper than paying ransom," he told a neighbor later.

Ethnic Chinese businessmen and their relatives are the main targets of a flourishing kidnapping industry in the Philippines, forcing them to take such measures to protect themselves.

Fortune magazine of the United States gave Manila the title of "kidnap capital" of Asia, and the lucrative but illegal industry remains an embarrassment to President Fidel Ramos, who has been criticized for failing to stop the scourge.

While the government says the almost daily abductions reported by anti-crime groups are exaggerated, many in the ethnic Chinese community have taken to target shooting and cutting down on social activities to evade kidnappers on the prowl.

David Sy Lato, 32, owner of the three-year old MDSA gun club, said membership has risen to about 700 people, largely because of rising crime, including kidnappings and robberies. Most members are young, upwardly mobile Filipino-Chinese.

"Many have bought guns but rarely know how to use it. Our aim is to familiarize gun owners with their firearms," he told AFP. "It's the young Filipino-Chinese who bring their moms and dads to the firing range instead of the other way around," he said.

Fifty people were kidnapped in the first three months of the year and 30.6 million pesos ($1.2 million) in ransom money was raised — not counting probable other cases which go unreported, said Citizens Action Against Crime (CAAC), a private watchdog group based in Manila's Chinatown.

In 1996, 241 people were kidnapped, up from 199 in 1995. There were 286 kidnappings in 1994 and 179 in 1993, according to the group. Recorded ransom paid by relatives in 1996 totalled 109.9 million pesos ($4.2 million).

Most kidnappings take place in Manila and in the main southern island of Mindanao, where groups of former rebels turned bandits operate.

Davidson Ngo, 25, makes it a habit to bring his licensed super .38 caliber pistol whenever he needs to stay out late.

"I practice target shooting mainly for sports. But I need it also for self-defense," he told AFP at an indoor firing range here.

Stores in Chinatown close early and children are advised against staying out late at night in discos, bars and in friends' homes, one source said.

Businessmen buy ordinary cars instead of "flashy" vehicles and eat out late only when it is necessary, the source added.

CAAC spokeswoman Tess Baltazar charged that police and military officers are involved in kidnap gangs and the lack of political will to arrest and prosecute them is contributing to the boom.

"Kidnappers are very brazen because they feel they have protection," Baltazar said.

Alejandro Melchor, head of another anti-crime group, said ransom payments were being made in the vicinity of the police and armed forces headquarters in Manila — bolstering suspicion that some men in uniform are either leaders, members or protectors of these gangs.

Baltazar said many kidnap victims are rich ethnic Chinese businessmen who are so low-profile that people do not even know they are wealthy.

"So it takes a lot of intelligence work to know who these people are," she said, pointing to the military and police as the most capable of such kind of information gathering.

"We feel that this problem will not be solved until and unless they find the powerful people behind it," she said.

Jimmy Tang, president of the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, denied reports of capital flight from among the ethnic Chinese businessmen.

"There are always cases (of kidnapping) even in Taiwan and any other areas," he said.

Professor Charged With Importing Boy

MIAMI — A Florida professor has been charged in a scheme where he allegedly paid the parents of a Honduran boy to allow him to bring the child to the United States to be his sex partner, authorities said recently.

Marvin Hersh, a professor of business and mathematics at Florida Atlantic University, was named in papers filed on Friday by the U.S. attorney's office in Miami.

The affidavit listed evidence from a year-long investigation, citing witnesses' testimony, documents and computer files.

The papers said Hersh traveled to the Central American country, obtained the boy, then 11, from his parents and used falsified documents to bring him to his house in Boca Raton, Florida.

The affidavit also alleged that Hersh, who enrolled the boy in elementary school and began adoption proceedings, had sex with the boy and his brother before bringing him from Honduras.

It said Hersh told witnesses he had traveled to other countries to perform sexual acts with boys and that he had sexual relations with the boy after bringing him to Florida.

The affidavit also cited documents showing that Hersh had admitted during divorce proceedings 12 years ago that he had had sex with young boys since he was a teenager.

Hersh has been suspended from Florida Atlantic University. Officials there told the *Miami Herald* they were shocked by the allegations against Hersh, who has been on the faculty staff since September 1990.

Hersh was charged with smuggling an illegal alien and passport fraud. *(Reuter)*

Tasmanian Tigers Reportedly Roam the Jungles

JAKARTA — Tasmanian tigers, believed extinct since 1933, are now claimed to be living in the rainforests of Irian Jaya, the mountainous Indonesian province neighboring Papua New Guinea, it was reported here recently.

The head of the Irian Jaya Office of the Indonesian Forestry Ministry, M. Kayat R. Sutaryo said he had sent a team of experts to investigate reported sightings by locals, the official Antara news agency said.

"Should the team find such a rare tiger species, the Forestry Ministry will develop the area as a research and tourist site," Sutaryo said.

The Tasmanian tiger, known to have lived in Australia and New Zealand before World War II, was reputed to live in mountain caves. *(AFP)*

Eurodisney Throws Fifth Anniversary Party

PARIS — Eurodisney's theme park on the edge of Paris, Europe's biggest single tourist attraction, celebrated its fifth anniversary on Saturday, inviting some of its French twins to the party.

Twenty-five children born between 9 and 9.30 a.m. on April 12 1992, when the theme park opened, blew the candles on the birthday cake.

Decried from the outset by French intellectuals as a cultural Chernobyl, Disneyland Paris, in Marne-la-Vallee east of the French capital, drew nearly 12 million people last year, twice as many as the Eiffel Tower and five times as many as the tower of London.

Despite a difficult debut, the group's results have been improving constantly despite a poor tourism climate. In the 1996 fiscal year, turnover was up nine percent to five billion francs ($860 million). The number of visitors was on the same trend, chairman Gilles Pelisson told the daily newspaper *Le Parisien*.

Eurodisney's 20 billion franc ($3.4 billion) debt burden nearly drove it into the ground. It was saved by a financial restructuring which included a holiday on debt payments and royalty and management fees to the Walt Disney Co., the U.S.-based group which owns 39 percent.

Pelisson told *Le Parisien* Eurodisney was still 15 billion francs ($2.5 billion) in debt.

A company spokesman said more than 50 million people had visited the park, packed with more than 40 attractions including the Space Mountain thrill ride, since the opening.

Despite French criticism that the Disney brand of entertainment was too American, one in five of the country's 56 million inhabitants has been to the park at least once.

Admission prices have been slightly lowered, and in a concession to local taste, the park has dropped a ban on alcoholic drinks and agreed to serve wine.

The chairman of the Disney Group, Michael Eisner, was due to attend the birthday party, to which more than 1,000 children from poor European families have been invited free of charge.

Some 700 dancers and musicians were staging a noon (1000 GMT) parade, with opera Diva Barbara Hendricks performing the happy birthday song.

An eight-screen Gaumont Cinema is scheduled to open next month, a second convention center is under construction and should open in the autumn, and public authorities have approved the development of a commercial shopping center.

As the park expands, Pelisson said it would be served by a second high-speed TGV train station due to open by 2000 as well as by a second RER express commuter train station and a second motorway interchange.

Last November, despite cautious consumer spending that has hit France's leisure industry, Eurodisney reported a second consecutive profit for its October-to-September fiscal year.

But a five-year rollercoaster ride that has left the stock at a fraction of its offer price, trading at 10.00 francs ($1.70) this week, down 85 percent from an all-time high four years ago.

Company officials say the commercial success of the theme park will lead to financial rewards when the economy picks up and visitors start to spend more freely.

Adjacent developments, which will not be financed by Eurodisney but by third parties, are expected to generate more business. *(Reuter)*

Electric Chair Gets Clean Bill of Health

TALLAHASSEE, Florida — Old sparky, Florida's 74-year-old electric chair, got a clean bill of health recently from two engineers called in to examine it after flames leaped from the head of a death row inmate during an execution.

The findings were released a day after the Florida Supreme Court delayed the execution of convicted killer Leo Jones until a judge hears testimony on whether the chair, which has malfunctioned twice in seven years, represents cruel and unusual punishment.

Florida Governor Lawton Chiles ordered the examination of the electric chair after the March 25 execution of Pedro Medina for the 1982 murder of Dorothy James, an Orlando School teacher.

Witnesses saw a blue and orange flame flare out of the helmet covering Medina's head. It burned for about 10 seconds, filling the chamber with acrid smoke and the smell of burning flesh.

An investigation by prison officials blamed the flare-up on a corroded brass screen used in the helmet.

But investigators Michael Morse and Jay Wiechart, both experienced in electric chair design and operation, on Friday blamed the malfunction on a dry sponge used in conjunction with a wet sponge in the helmet.

The use of the dry sponge, Morse and Wiechart agreed, caused the current to be tightly focused, which raised the temperature and caused the sponge to burn.

Both men recommended doing away with the dry sponge and using a more conductive solution of salt water to soak the remaining sponge.

"The execution machinery continues to perform at an appropriate current and voltage level to perform executions without causing pain or undue suffering," Morse concluded.

Chiles said he was satisfied with the report and confident the electric chair was working properly.

On Thursday, Florida's highest court ordered the execution of Jones delayed at least three days so a trial judge could hear testimony on whether the state's electric chair, as it now operates, represents cruel and unusual punishment.

Jones had been scheduled to die on Tuesday for the 1981 murder of a Jacksonville police officer.

In a 4-3 decision, the court limited the judge to investigating whether the state's electric chair was working properly and not whether electrocution as a means of execution represented cruel and unusual punishment. *(Reuter)*

Expert Stops Pisa Tower From Leaning Further

LONDON — Pisa's famous Leaning Tower has been saved from toppling further by a British soil expert, who advised authorities to place large amounts of lead on one side of its base, the *Times of London* reported.

"We are euphoric. The tower has stopped its tilt. This is the greatest success in seven centuries," Saturday editions of the *Times* quoted John Burland as saying.

Burland, professor of soil mechanics at Imperial College, London, said authorities did not aim to straighten the tower, a major attraction in the northern Italian city of Pisa, but halt its inclination, "otherwise there would be no leaning tower."

The *Times* said Burland was called in four years ago after Italian authorities calculated that the tower, by then some five meters (17 feet) out of perpendicular, could topple by the year 2050.

On his advice, 900 tons of lead was laid on the ground around its high side, the *Times* said.

The Italian government has invested millions of dollars and canvassed widely for advice to secure the circular marble bell tower, which was closed in 1991 for safety reasons. City authorities hope it can be reopened by 2000.

Begun in 1174, the 54-meter (179-foot), 15,000-ton tower was completed 186 years later. The ground beneath the structure started sinking after the first three of its eight stories were finished.

The tower has walls 3.9 meters (13 feet) thick at its base and about 1.8 m (six feet) thick at the top. The structure has tipped about 30 centimeters (one foot) during the past 100 years. *(AP)*

Oxford Suicide Puts Spotlight on Exam Stress

OXFORD, England — A brilliant 22-year-old Oxford University student has been found hanged in her lodgings just weeks before her final examinations, officials said recently.

Sarah Napuk, from Edinburgh, who was found by a friend in her bedroom close to her college Lady Margaret Hall Thursday, had a dazzling future ahead of her, according to college officials. The history student had recently won a Kennedy scholarship to study at Harvard University.

She had undergone counselling recently, but her college principal said she had been responding well to treatment. She herself had helped counsel other students in difficulty as her college's welfare officer.

"She had so much love for everyone. I just wish she could have had it for herself," said her brother David, 20.

Napuk's death has highlighted the stress that faces students at one of the world's most famous universities where a graduate's degree is often judged entirely on a set of exams crammed into a matter of days.

One of the lesser-known facts about Oxford is that each year a number of students sit their final exams in a closed ward of the nearby Warneford Mental Hospital. Sixty beds are generally put aside for the purpose.

Four years ago a study found suicide rates among Oxford students were 30 percent higher than the average for their age group — 26 people had killed themselves in 14 years.

So far the university has resisted plans to reform its exam system, or the college tutorial system, which separates students from the rest of their year and means the same small group of intelligent, but sometimes unstable students are thrown together in an insular environment where they study and socialize throughout their time at university. *(AFP)*



هكذا من الأصل



THOUGHT

THERE are some people who leave impressions not so lasting as the imprint of an oar upon the water.

Anonymous

PRAYER

Noon 13:05
Evening 19:57
Dawn (tomorrow) 04:55
Sunrise (tomorrow) 06:32

Scientists See Progress in Blocking AIDS Virus

WASHINGTON — Two teams of scientists last week reported they had been able to block the AIDS virus from infiltrating and infecting certain blood cells.

One team in effect locked the virus out of certain blood cells in a test tube. The other team issued a progress report in a small, novel experiment that entails taking white blood cells, modifying them to resist AIDS, and then infusing them into a patient. That work is still underway.

Both research projects are still in its early stages and do not herald any immediate therapeutic breakthroughs. But they represent a bridge from last year's groundbreaking discoveries about a group of proteins called chemokines to the laborious process of developing drugs.

The studies will appear this week in the *Journal Science*.

One project was led by scientists at Olaxo Wellcome research and development in Geneva and the other by the U.S. Naval medical research institute just outside Washington.

Chemokines affect white blood cells that help protect the body against viruses or bacteria. They attach to special chemokine receptors that protrude from the white blood cells.

The HIV virus that causes AIDS also can latch on to these receptors and from there infiltrate the cell.

In the Glaxo project, scientists were able to alter a chemokine so it docked to the ccr5 receptor, preventing the AIDS virus from entering two different types of cells, lymphocytes and macrophages, scientist Amanda Proudfoot said in a telephone interview from Geneva.

But the modification to the chemokine known as rantes let the molecule occupy this site without setting off a chain of events that could lead to an unwanted and exaggerated immune reaction.

We want to bind and block the virus without turning on the signal for the immune response, said Mike Lothar, the Glaxo scientist heading the chemokine project.

A layperson could think of the receptor as a parking place, and the chemokine as the car. Normally, the car might set off an undesirable alarm — the immune response — when it parked. The modified one could park silently, but still block the AIDS virus from reaching the site.

The other study on cell infusion is headed by Carl June of the Naval Hospital.He has said in the past that he was able to isolate white blood cells known as dc4 t-cells and treat them with monoclonal antibodies. They proliferated 8,000-fold and seemed to be able to resist infection with HIV.

(Reuter)

U.S. Says Drug-Resistant Salmonella Spreading

ATLANTA — One of the most common strains of salmonella is showing increasing signs of resistance to the antibiotics normally used to treat it, Federal Health officials said recently.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said salmonella typhimurium, which accounts for at least 24 percent of all reported salmonella cases, is growing increasingly drug-resistant.

The CDC said a rising proportion of salmonella typhimurium samples involve a strain usually resistant to five commonly used antibiotics — ampicillin, chloramphenicol, streptomycin, sulfonamides and tetracycline.

In the past six or seven years this subtype has grown from being about seven percent of all salmonella typhimurium isolates that we've tested to almost 40 percent, Dr. Jeremy Sobel of the CDC's division of bacterial and mycotic diseases said.

It is definitely increasing in incidence, Sobel said. It may be driving up the total number of illnesses.

The drug-resistant strain caused an outbreak of diarrhoeal illness among school children in Nebraska last year. The source of the infection has not been determined.

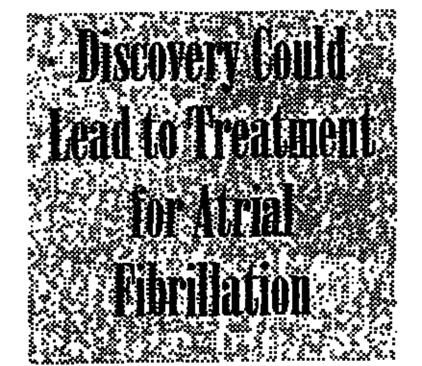
Unlike the most common type of salmonella, the drug- resistant strain has been linked to sick farm animals and eating contaminated meat. It has been transmitted from cattle and sheep to people and has also been found in cats, wild birds, rodents, foxes and badgers.

In Britain, where the drug-resistant strain has been reported for more than a decade, 41 percent of people infected with the organism have required hospitalization and three percent have died. The more common form of salmonella, usually transmitted by eggs, causes far fewer deaths.

This is a type of salmonella which appeared first in the United Kingdom in 1984 and it rapidly emerged and became the second most-common type of salmonella in the U.K. , Sobel said.

The organism is acquiring even further resistance to antibiotics which are commonly used for treating salmonella and similar infections, he said.

(Reuter)



Discovery Could Lead to Treatment for Atrial Fibrillation

HOUSTON — Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine have linked some cases of atrial fibrillation, the most common cause of irregular heartbeats, to an inherited chromosome abnormality.

Researchers at the Houston School found the abnormality after "mapping" the DNA of 26 members of a family in Spain. Ten of them had atrial fibrillation.

The Baylor researchers discovered the "locus" for a gene responsible for inherited atrial fibrillation on what they described as chromosome 10.

They are looking for volunteers with a family history of atrial fibrillation to continue searching for the cause of the disease.

The study was published in the March 27 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

(AP)

TODAY IN HISTORY

1912 - Liner Titanic strikes iceberg in North Atlantic, and more than 1,500 lives are lost when ship sinks.

1931 - King Alfonso flees in Spanish revolution, and Alcala Zamora becomes president of provisional government.

1945 - U.S. bombers pound Tokyo and Japan's imperial palace in World War II.

1970 - U.S. Apollo 13 spacecraft heads back to Earth after Moon mission that was aborted because of mechanical problems.

1977 - Soviet Union orders its fishing fleet to strictly observe new fishing regulations set by United States off its coasts.

1988 - Soviet Union signs accord to end its intervention in Afghanistan and to allow Red Army to start troop withdrawal.

1990 - Lithuanian President Vytautus Landsbergis says Lithuania will not revoke its declaration of independence, despite Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's threat of an economic embargo.

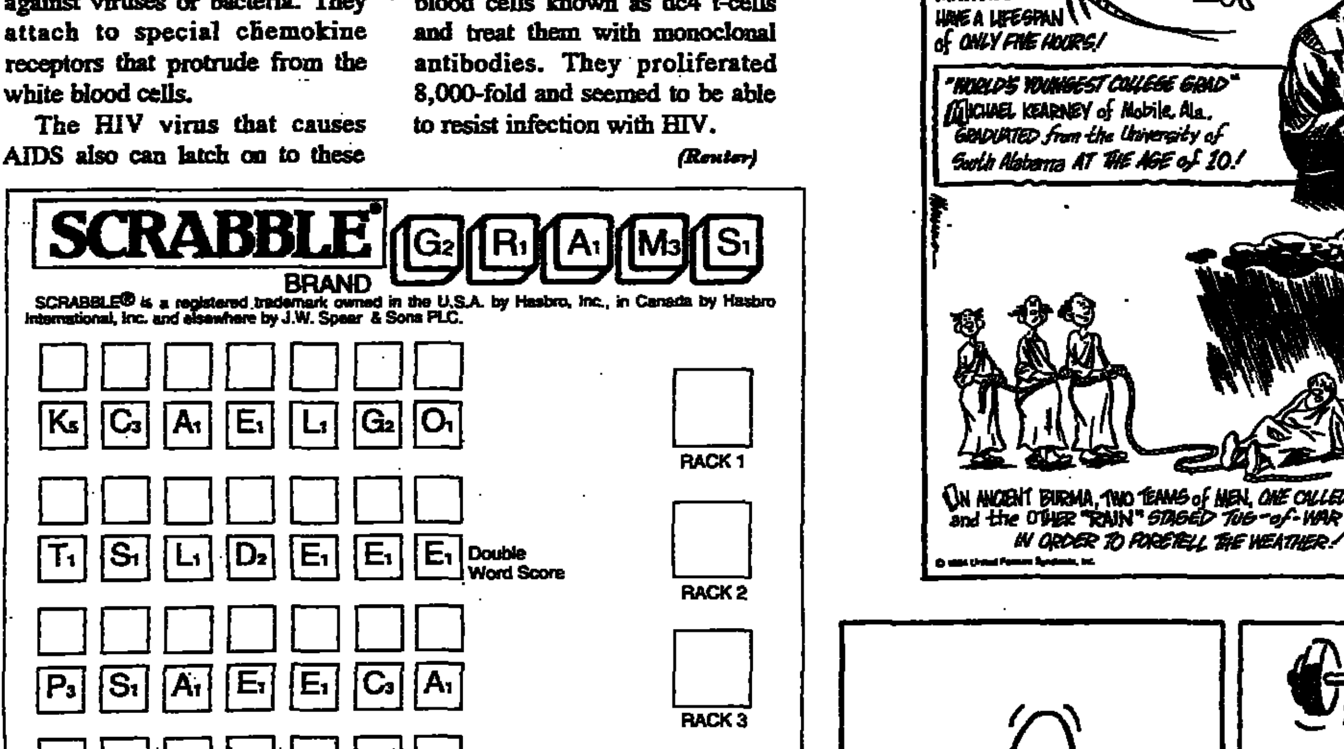
1991 - U.S., British and French aircraft drop tons of supplies to Kurdish refugees stranded on the Turkish and Iranian borders.

1992 - UN warns Iraq it risks military confrontation by moving missiles to Kurdish areas.

1993 - On International Women's Day, a Chinese newspaper asked 100 women what they would like to be. Sixty said they wanted to be men

THE GOOD NEWS

Surgery and drugs are equally effective in the immediate aftermath of a heart attack. Researchers compared an operation that mechanically opens clogged arteries with a medication that dissolves the clots that plug up those same arteries. For both procedures, the death rate hovered around 5%.



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K5	C3	A1	E1	L1	G2	O1		RACK 1
T1	S1	L1	D2	E1	E1	E1	Double Word Score	RACK 2
P3	S1	A1	E1	E1	C3	A1		RACK 3
R1	A1	E1	E1	T1	G2	R1	Triple Word Score	RACK 4

PAR SCORE 135-145

by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL ____
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: *Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (Merriam-Webster) and OSW Official Scrabble Words (Chambers).* **JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW**

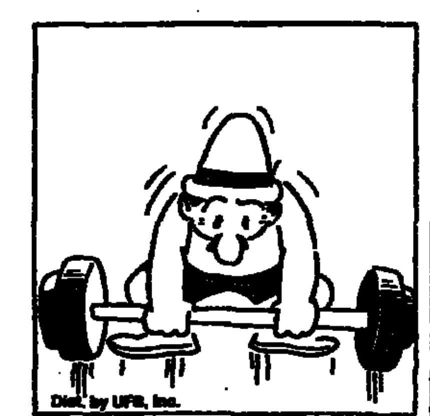
4-8-95

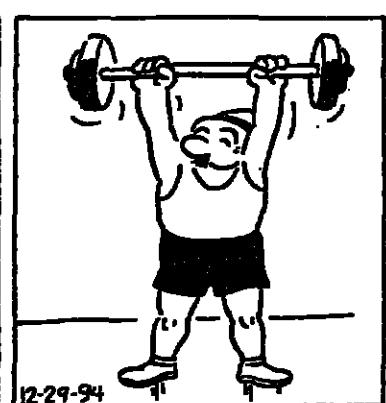
SCRABBLE® BRAND GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUDD

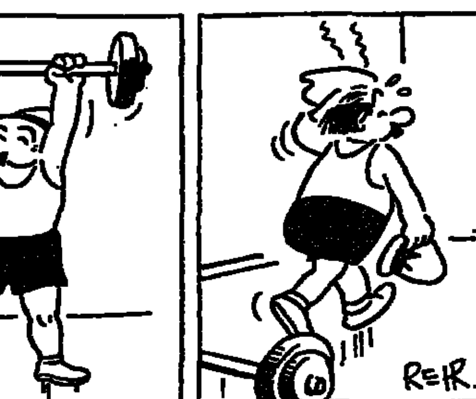
S1	Y4	L1	L1	A1	B3	I1	RACK 1 = 66
P3	A1	S1	S1	A1	G2	E1	RACK 2 = 60
A1	B3	Y4	S1	M3	A1	L1	RACK 3 = 72
B3	E1	A1	R1	I1	N1	G2	RACK 4 = 60

PAR SCORE 165-175 JUDD'S TOTAL 258

4-7-95





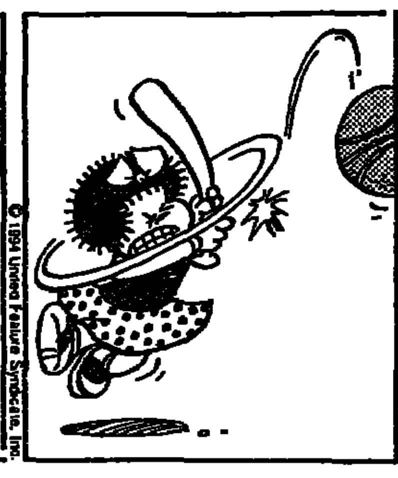














In the Name of God
I. R. of Iran
Ministry of Commerce
Deputy for Exports

Tehran International Trade Fair — Export Promotion Center of Iran

23rd Tehran International Trade Fair
October 2-9, 1997

In line with the economic goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Export Promotion Center of Iran (EPCI) is planning to stage the 23rd Tehran International Trade Fair in an attempt to boost non-oil exports, stimulate greater export competition among domestic manufacturers, facilitate the transfer of technology and ultimately to put on view the economic, technical and commercial potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As growing demand for participation in the 23rd Tehran International Trade Fair may result in a shortage of exhibition space, all interested firms and companies are requested to send their application to the EPCI latest by May 12, 1997. After site allocation and other preparations, applicants will be invited to sign fair participation contract. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. For further information you may contact the organizer on telephone number 2191564 and 2191568, Fax: 2042858

Please complete and send the following application form to P.O.Box 1148, Tajrish.

Name of company:

Address:

Telephone No.: Fax No.:

Space needed (in square meters)

Field of activity:

Country:



هكذا من الأصل

Albanians Watch Crisis Live on Italian TV

TIRANA — The shooting might be right outside their doorsteps but the Albanians are watching it on Italian TV.

Since mid-January, when the domestic situation first started heating up, Albanians again crowded into the country's living rooms — just like they did when the communist regime fell here in 1992.

"Everyone watches Italian television," said Laura, 24. "The news given on the Albanian station is not enough. With the Italian stations, we get all the details.."

Whether state-run or private, the stations are easily monitored here thanks to the proliferation of satellite dishes — which sell for the equivalent of 150 dollars — but even a simple 20-dollar antenna will often do.

Reports from Italy sometimes shed a different light on the events in Albania but in general the Albanians appear more willing to believe what they see on foreign television.

The refugee boat en route to Italy that sank last month was a case in point. The Kater i Rades went down off Brindisi on March 28 after colliding with an Italian warship, leaving four people dead and 83 missing. Only 34 people were rescued.

It was the first accident of its kind in the flight that has brought some 13,000 Albanians to Italy since mid-March, and triggered recriminations from both sides that, at one point, threatened to cloud Italy's efforts to lead a multinational force to Albanian to ensure aid deliveries.

Albania's ambassador in Rome, Pandeli Pasko, said the Italian ship "deliberately rammed" the Albanian tug, but the Italian navy said the tug had ignored an order to stop and suddenly turned across the warship's bow.

"The television in Tirana said the Italians sank the boat on purpose, the Italian stations said it was an accident and I would tend to believe them," said Laura's mother, Leta. "I know the Italians don't like the refugees, but to do something like that deliberatedly. .."

This week even the *Zeripopullit*, the newspaper of Albania's main opposition Socialist Party, complained that "neighboring countries are putting Albania at the top of the news while Albanian television gives us only vague and dreary reports." The situation has on occasion left Italy as both observer and actor in the same drama. It has also raised questions over what influence Italian TV has had on the course of events since Albania broke down into open rebellion when failed investment schemes caused many here to lose their life savings.

The huge refugee flight could in part have been triggered by the widely shown interviews with Italian officials who vowed that Rome would not turn away anyone seeking to flee the lawlessness across the Adriatic.

And the tears shed by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi — the head of Italy's rightwing opposition who owns several private TV stations — when he visited the survivors from the Kater i Rades disaster, could explain in part why teams from his stations can now work without hindrance in the southern part of Albania which is in the hands of insurgents.

In the same zone, cameramen for the Italian state-owned Rai station would cover the "Rai" label on equipment to avoid getting pelted with stones.

The night the Kater i Rades sank, Italian TV brought the emotion literally into the home of one Albanian, Pasha Xhavara, whose two sons, their wives and children had all boarded the doomed tug in Vlore.

His telephone rang and as he answered, one of his own sons appeared on television, in tears as he spoke to his father from a *telehphone booth in the Italian port* of Brindisi to let him know he was alive.

Aid groups have quickly gotten the message. When UNICEF, the UN children's fund, wanted to urge parents to warn kids about the numerous grenades that had been looted from army depots, it did so on Telenorba, a small private television station based in the Puglia region of southern Italy that is widely watched in southern Albania.

The language poses no problem. In one of Europe's poorest countries where there are few distractions for kids, television occupies a big part in the lives of Albanian children who quickly learn Italian watching undubbed cartoons and other programs.

(AFP)

Europe and Union Power Dominate as Fourth Week of Election Campaign Closes

LONDON — The fourth week of the British general election campaign drew to a close Sunday with the ruling Tories facing embarrassment over their stance on Europe and opposition Labour being taunted over an alleged secret deal with the trade unions.

Prime Minister John Major appeared unable to keep the lid on divisions within his party as he came under pressure Saturday to sack one of his ministers over comments on the thorny question of the planned European single currency.

Agriculture Minister Angela Browning suggested that the transfer from Britain of gold and reserves — an integral part of joining the single currency — was a step too far and would force her to oppose European Monetary Union (EMU).

Her comments, in a campaign leaflet, contradicted the official Conservative Party policy of "wait-and-see" on how the single currency develops before deciding whether Britain should join.

This week could see a rash of similar embarrassments for the Tories when candidates publish the text of their addresses to constituencies, revealing those who are sticking to party policy and those in open revolt against Europe.

Some 200 Conservatives — a *good third of the party's* candidates — may contest seats on an anti-Europe ticket, according to estimations in the press.

Labour, widely expected to win the May 1 election, seized on Browning's comments and demanded that the prime minister order her to withdraw her comments or face the sack.

Major refused, claiming her views had been "totally distorted".

Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine meanwhile accused Labour of having reached a secret deal with the trade unions ahead of the election.

"Anyone who is watching events can see that we haven't even got to the stage where there is a Labour government and yet the atmosphere is changing as the drivers of the union movement find themselves getting more and more used to the idea that it might be 'back to the old days, boys'," said Heseltine.

Labour was set up as the mouthpiece of the Trade Union movement at the start of the century but has increasingly distanced itself from organized Labour under its current leader Tony Blair.

The party faced further accusations of being in thrall to the unions from former Tory leader Margaret Thatcher.

In an interview with the *Sunday Telegraph*, Thatcher recalled the power the trades unions had over Labour governments in the 1970s *and warned that if the party* were elected then the Trade Union "bully boys" would be back "virtually running the country".

She also warned that Blair "may well have some genuine conversion, but look at some of those who sit on the opposition front bench with him.

"They are not exactly born-again Tories. I see old socialists keeping quiet," said Thatcher.

Blair, in an interview with the *Sunday Times*, rejected any suggestions that he would pander to the unions.

"No one has expectations that they will vote Labour on Thursday and the money will start rolling on Friday. People know that is not the case. I believe the unions understand that. If they don't, they will find out," he insisted.

And he repeated his warning *that Labour is unlikely to ever* win power again if it fails to clinch victory in the May vote.

"It is difficult to see the circumstances in which it is possible to succeed if we can't do it now," he said.

Three opinion polls published in Sunday papers were at odds over the strength of Labour's lead, but all agreed the party was far ahead of the ruling Tories with less than three weeks to go before the poll. *(AFP)*

Maple Syrup — How Sweet It is

ORWELL, Vt. — Tom and Mike Audet started tapping maple trees a full week early this year and like most New England syrup makers they expect a sweet season.

Here in the Champlain Valley, a sudden warm spell that sent temperatures well above freezing in early March caught by surprise most of the diary farmers who also make the bulk of the state's most famous crop.

"The trees were just gushing," said Tom Audet, at 45 a year older than his brother. "You have to tap when it gets warm," he said, but warm is a relative term.

"Officially, sap starts running when the thermometer goes above freezing. Unofficially, warm is when you can feel the sun on the back of your head," he said, running a big hand through the few strands of blond hair on his head.

The brothers' 120-acre (48 hectare) dairy farm, Ledge Haven, has been in the family for three generations and for three generations they have been using three stands of hard maple trees, called sugarbushes here, to make maple syrup.

It takes the sap from about four maple trees to make one gallon of maple syrup.

Wearing an old lumberjacket, jeans and mud-covered boots,

"Officially, sap starts running when the thermometer goes above freezing. Unofficially, warm is when you can feel the sun on the back of your head."

"It gets in your blood," Mike said, his callused hands sticky from the last batch. "It has to. You really have to love what you're doing or else you'd be crazy to do this."

Doing this means going around the cold, muddy sugarbush stands, sometimes twice a day, to empty tin buckets or hoses or plastic containers that resemble IV bags filled with sap and bringing it back to the sugary, where it is boiled down over the course of several hours and made into maple syrup.

Many Trees Equal Little Syrup

Mike leaned against a huge pan used in the process and explained. "It's sort of like being back in college, you know. In a good season you'll pull a couple of all-nighters hauling the sap and boiling it down. There's sort of a competition sometimes to see how long you can stay on your feet."

Sugaring season is short in New England, generally lasting only six weeks, and as the season of cold nights and warmer days wears on the color of the syrup changes from a very light copper to dark amber, accounting for the different grades of the syrup that contributes an estimated $100 million to Vermont's economy.

The season provides a much-needed economic bridge for the farmers. "It's still too early to plant and sugaring provides some extra income at a time of year when there isn't much income," Mike said as he went from the sugary to a barn where 120 holsteins were waiting to be milked.

Sam Cutting, Sr., whose family owns Dakin farm in Ferrisburg just north of Orwell and who has been sugaring for 37 years, explained: "Maple syrup, which does have complex flavors, differs from Wine. Generally speaking, maple syrup does not age well. The whole trick to making maple syrup is making it fresh."

On the other side of the green mountains in the state capital, Montpelier, agriculture expert Henry Mackres, a big man with a salt-'n'-pepper beard who has been sugaring since he was a child, is proud of the product that has become his to taste and approve.

Four Grades of Syrup, All Sweet

A lot of places make maple syrup. Quebec's the no. 1 producer in the world. But nowhere is maple syrup better than Vermont, he said, explaining that fancy syrup has a lighter, more delicate flavor while dark amber has the most pronounced maple taste.

There are four grades of maple syrup depending on color and taste. Those are really the only differences. And one isn't really better than any other. It's all a matter of personal taste, said Mackres, who prefers fancy.

"Even though I've been doing this for a long time, I'm convinced that the more you know about maple syrup the less you really do know. You can't really tell what day it's going to run."

John Snell, who has been sugaring for more than 20 years, said he uses the Vermont test kit and standards for maple syrup made on his farm in Buxton, Maine.

"Even though I've been doing this for a long time, I'm convinced that the more you know about maple syrup the less you really do know. You can't really tell what day it's going to run," Snell said, debunking the myth that the sap is running when the icicles are melting. Actually, sap does not run at all. It drips, much like the water from icicles.

Sugaring is definitely a sweet way to welcome spring, Snell said.

(Reuter)

Tsar Peter the Great Causes Monumental Moscow Row

MOSCOW — Three centuries after he forsook Moscow to build himself a new capital in St. Petersburg, Peter the Great is back in the city he despised — and may face expulsion.

Many Moscovites loathe a new 60-meter (196 feet) statue of the tsar which has arisen on the banks of the Moscow river, calling it an eyesore of colossal proportions.

"It is ugly, it is horrible," said Sergei, a 37-year-old engineer walking around the latest oeuvre of Moscow monumentalist sculptor Zurab Tsereteli.

The work shows the tsar, holding a ship's wheel as a symbol of the Russian fleet he created in the 18th century, on a huge spiked pedestal in the style of the bows of an ancient Roman warship. The monument looks something like a dragon's tail.

Tsereteli's homage to the tsar has triggered a wave of discontent among the population of Moscow, which is tired of massive artistic monuments of often dubious quality.

A group of protestors, led by Moscow gallery-owner Murat Gelman, is demanding its demolition and threatening to organize a costly city referendum on the future of the iron tsar.

Many Moscovites loathe a new 60-meter (196 feet) statue of the tsar which has arisen on the banks of the Moscow river, calling it an eyesore of colossal proportions.

"We do not think that a monument of such proportions should be placed in the city center," Roman Tkash, one of the anti-Peter activists, told Reuters.

According to Moscow law, the city must hold a referendum if anybody gathers 100,000 signatures on a specific issue. Such a poll would cost several million dollars and burden the budget of the already cash-strapped capital.

Yeltsin Joins Outcry

President Boris Yeltsin has joined the protests, saying he has had enough of Tsereteli's controversial statues, which already adorn many parts of Moscow.

"I recently have more than once criticized Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and sculptor Tsereteli, especially for the monument to Peter," Yeltsin said. "Moscow's backing of Tsereteli is a vain thing. Don't we have other sculptors and artists?"

Tsereteli, who likes his statues tall and pointed, became Russia's most controversial artist after Lushkov commissioned for a series of projects, including a centerpiece to a World War II museum which opened in 1995.

The monument outside the museum is a tall obelisk adorned with cherubs and a goddess and embossed with the names of the Soviet Union's hero cities in the war against Nazi Germany. Irreverent critics have dubbed it the monkey on a stick.

Luzhkov, an ambitious and popular politician who some say might become Yeltsin's successor, was miffed by the protests. And so was Tsereteli.

The Interfax news agency quoted Luzhkov as saying the protests amounted to persecution.

"He expressed amazement that any ordinary journalist, even one who entered journalism straight from college, could judge culture with such frivolity," the agency quoted the mayor as saying in January.

Luzhkov then created a commission to deal with the public pressure and said it would decide on Peter's future within weeks.

Moscow officials say the cost of the monument, once finished, would be 100 billion roubles ($17.5 million), while it would cost 30 to 50 billion roubles to dismantle it.

(Reuter)

Computer Chaos in 2000 Will Cost UK $50 Billion

LONDON — The cost of adjusting Britain's computers to cope with the turn of the century is estimated at £31 billion ($50 billion) by the head of an organization set up to tackle the "millennium bomb" problem, it was reported Friday.

The *Financial Times* said previous figures had underestimated by three times the first official prediction of the cost of reprogramming the country's computers to take account of the switch from 1999 to 2000.

To save on memory and data processing, computers and programs from the 1970s and 1980s were designed to understand dates in double-digit terms.

Thus they cannot distinguish whether "00" means 1900 or 2000 — and the knock-on results could well mean computers that crash and program applications that gum up.

Robin Guenier, head of Taskforce 2000 — set up by the British government to look at the problem — based his figure on the four million companies that were likely to be affected and the number of extra staff they would have to hire to correct the problem.

He said he forecast that an extra 300,000 computer staff would be needed — equal to the number of full-time computer professionals in the country.

The implication was, the *Financial Times* said, that with less than 1,000 days to go until 2000, solving the problem was impossible.

"They (companies) understand the problem, but they are not getting on with it," said Guenier.

U.S. experts have estimated the cost to the global economy of 2000-related computer breakdowns will run in excess of $500 billion.

(AFP)

"English-Dominated Internet Is Colonialist"

WASHINGTON — The English-dominated Internet is a "new form of colonialism," French Justice Minister Jacques Toubon tells *US News and World Report* magazine in its latest issue.

Toubon tells the magazine that the survival of French culture is at stake.

"If we do nothing, it will be too late," Toubon says. "We will be colonialized."

The Internet's content is about 90 percent English, the magazine says, and only five percent French.

In response, the French have adopted a law requiring that goods advertised in France on the Internet be translated into French.

Ironically, the magazine notes, the first test case involves the French suing the U.S. Georgia Institute of Technology, which has a campus in France.

But the institute's French Web site has information on courses in English — because most courses are in English and all students, including French ones, must speak English.

The magazine suggests that the French are hypocritical by not taking on French companies which happen to do business exclusively in English on the Internet, such as the French technology firm Bull.

"We consider that most of our customers who are connected understand English," a spokesman for Bull tells *US News and World* report.

(AFP)

Aging Oarswomen Remind of Slower, Gentler Times

HONG KONG — When she was 3, her impoverished family sold her off to pay for her mother's funeral. Today, at 69, after a lifetime of hard labor, Chow Mai-Lui is one of the last of Tai O's sampan ladies.

Every day, she rows her narrow boat back and forth alongside the island, giving her tourist passengers a sense of what life was like before downtown Hong Kong was skyscrapered over.

Two hours by ferry and bus from the city center, out of sight of the urban skyline, Tai O lies off the southwest coast of Lantau, Hong Kong's largest island.

Its 130 acres (50 hectares) offer clean air, old streets and shrines honoring Chinese generals of centuries ago. Beyond the tiny village of stone-paved alleys and huts on stilts lie green hills and hiking trails.

The nameless 100-foot-wide (30-meter-wide) channel separates Tai O from Lantau Island and allows it to call itself Hong Kong's Venice.

"Hello, $10 ... sampan, Hong Kong Venice," Chow mumbles in broken English to foreigners. That's 10 Hong Kong dollars — or U.S.$1.30 for the half-hour jaunt.

With the young people leaving for the city, the population of Tai O has dwindled over the years from 40,000 to about 6,000, and tourism has replaced fishing as its main industry.

"You can no longer find this kind of pleasant environment, with the traditional village houses, in the urban area," says Timothy Leung, 35, a computer programmer from urban Hong Kong who comes for the salted fish, Tai O's speciality.

Schooled in the rigors of Chinese peasant life, Chow and her sampan represent the flipside of a society whose stereotypical citizen carries a cellular phone and juggles a stock portfolio.

Short and wrinkled in a conical wicker hat, she knows the channel like the back of her gnarled hands. Slippered feet planted firmly on the rowing platform, she steers her sampan expertly past the shoreside huts of tin and bamboo.

The 12-foot (3.7-meter), partly covered sampan carries five passengers on each voyage.

For 50 years, people crossed the channel on a rope-ferry pulled by two villagers. Then, last October, a steel bridge went up and another Hong Kong institution died, leaving Chow and four other ladies to keep the sampan tradition alive.

She says she learned the skill from the woman who bought her from Shekou in South China in 1930, adopted her and named her "Mai-Lui," meaning "bought girl."

Her price was 49 Hong Kong dollars, probably around U.S.$500 in today's money.

She cut grass, gathered firewood and kept house for her new mother, but still can't write her name. "She never allowed me to study," she says.

At 11 she got into sampans. The tourism industry didn't exist then, so she would ferry the catches from big fishing boats, working from 7 a.m. till 11 p.m. each day.

She was happy to be making money. "You see, in the village, I couldn't earn anything out of gathering firewood."

A widow, she now works from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and makes about 1,000 Hong Kong dollars ($130) a month from her sampan, supplemented by help from her son and daughter, who have moved to the city.

(AP)



Aid Agencies Struggle to Feed Refugees



KASESE, Zaire - Bodies of the dead lay row on row at the place known only as kilometer 29, some wrapped in rough brown blankets, others naked and ignored by an estimated 80,000 refugees.

But the death rate was dropping as high-protein relief supplies began getting through, international aid workers said Wednesday.

"Basically once it arrives on the planes, we throw it right onto trains, we throw it onto trucks, virtually any transport available to get it here to these camps and to get it distributed as quickly as possible," said Michele Quintaglie, spokeswoman for the World Food Program. The Hutu refugees fled Rwanda three years ago to escape retribution for the Hutu-orchestrated slaughter of at least half a million minority Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus.

They are camped in a stretch of territory that runs 95 km (60 miles) south from Kisangani to Ubundu. Rebels seeking to topple the regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko seized Kisangani, Zaire's third largest city, on March 15.

Aid workers say that another 20,000 refugees are scattered amid the stench of death and human excrement in the thick jungle off the main track. Among them are 3,000 starving children.

The refugees refused to follow their compatriots and return home late last year from camps along the Zaire-Rwanda border where they had been living for two years. Former members of the Rwandan Hutu army and extremist militia pushed this group of refugees ever westward, often using them as human shields against the rebel advance.

The former soldiers and militia appear to have split off from the main group of refugees after the fall of Kisangani and have moved further west.

The death rate soared from 120 on Friday to 180 on Monday, but appeared to be declining Tuesday, when 20 people died, aid workers said.

Women and children are the most emaciated, and dying faster than the young men, many of them Hutu fighters who took part the 90-day orgy of killing in Rwanda that lasted from April to July 1994.

The refugees are stripping the surrounding forest bare to fuel their meager fires, arousing the anger of local villagers, some of whom have robbed aid trucks. (AP)

Society Needs Wake-Up Call On Child Abuse

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina - Delegates attending an Interpol congress on pedophilia recently urged governments worldwide to pass tough laws against offenders.

"We have laws to combat drugs, guns and organized crime. But people still don't acknowledge the serious nature of child abuse," detective inspector Bob McLachlan of Britain's metropolitan police pedophilia unit said in an interview.

The three-day congress, held behind closed doors, brought together delegates from 43 countries. Its aim is to increase cooperation among police forces and to propose training methods for law enforcement officials.

UNICEF estimates one million children a year are forced into child prostitution, trafficked for sexual purposes or used to produce pornography. Many are handed over by their own families, driven to extremes by poverty.

Delegates in Buenos Aires said the social taboo surrounding child abuse was one of the main hurdles to overcome before police can effectively tackle child abuse.

"Much of the world is in a state of denial," said Julian Fantino, police chief of London, Ontario. "people and governments must realize we are dealing with very evil adults."

The Internet has also given dealers in child pornography a far bigger audience - and anonymity, delegates said.

"The Internet isn't policed and is a free-wheeling enterprise," Factino said. "It allows you to do what you might do in the privacy of your own room, only electronically."

A 1994 study by the "end child prostitution in Asian tourism" group detected 800 pictures on the Internet of adults engaged in sexual acts with children aged between eight and ten.

Interpol Secretary General Miguel Chamorro opened the congress Tuesday and warned that a change of government mentality was required.

Child abuse "isn't a priority for politicians, some parliaments ... or, in some cases, police," Chamorro said in an opening speech. He urged countries to create special police units to detect child sex abuse offenders.

Henryk Handszuh of the world tourism organization said many European countries were lagging behind Asian countries with regards to punishment for offenders.

"Offenders can get up to 16 years, for example in Thailand. But in some European countries, you might get just a couple of months," Handszuh said.

"That's because many European countries have not yet realized what's at stake. The subject is taboo and people feel uncomfortable dealing with it," he said. (AP)

Croatia Refugee's Attitudes Hard on Election Day

OSIJEK, Croatia - A day before Croatia's first nationwide elections, attitudes towards Serbs living in the east of the country were as hard as ever and politicians' promises of reconciliation seemed optimistic.

In the city of Osijek, in sight of the front line of Croatia's 1991 war for independence from former Yugoslavia, thousands of Croat refugees who fled Serb attacks swear they will never live side by side with their former enemies.

Even local politicians admit re-integrating eastern Slavonia into Croatia could take far longer than originally promised. The region is now populated almost entirely by Serbs, including thousands of refugees from elsewhere in Croatia and Bosnia.

Around 26,000 displaced live in Osijek. The splendid old Austro-Hungarian town with wide avenues and squares has an air of faded grandeur and is enclosed on three sides by eastern Slavonia.

Just outside the town boundary lies a sprawling refugee camp — home to 2,600 people. Prefabricated huts stand in neat rows with satellite dishes sprouting from their roofs.

Outside many of the huts refugees have cultivated gardens with daffodils, apple trees and vegetable plots — proof that this former field has been home to hundreds for six years now.

Katica Vlahovic, 58, is one of the refugees who plans to move back to her home in eastern Slavonia after Sunday's municipal elections and like virtually all the others will vote for President Franjo Tudjman's conservative nationalist HDZ.

A woman knitting in the sunshine beside a strawberry plot by her house, said she was looking forward to living with former neighbours.

We've met our Serb neighbours twice. They are our closest friends and they've proved to be very good people who helped us a lot through all this. (AP)

Almost 100,000 Children Under 12 Work in Bolivia



LA PAZ, Bolivia - Almost 100,000 children under the age of 12 work for a living here, according to a report by a private survey company.

Some 82 percent of the 98,998 boys and girls in the survey tend animals in rural areas, while the remaining 18 percent work in cities as shoe-shiners, street vendors, and car washers, according to a report released Saturday by the survey company Encuestas Y. Estudios.

The figure represents 9.7 percent of the population of children between the ages of seven and 12, according to figures from the 1992 census.

The labor force is almost equally divided among boys and girls, according to the report.

A child selling newspapers in La Paz works for about 14 hours and makes less than a dollar a day. A shoe-shine child makes almost twice that amount, about $1.90 a day. (AFP)

Children Feared Drowned by Immigrant Smugglers in HK

Hong Kong —Police launches and a helicopter scoured waters off Hong Kong Saturday amid fears smugglers trying to bring mainland Chinese children into the territory had dumped their human cargo overboard to evade capture.

Police said an unlit speedboat had been detected overnight off the Ninepin islands, a small group east of Hong Kong island, and a police launch gave chase.

Police officer Mok Tun-Lan, in charge of the pursuit vessel, said the two men aboard the speedboat threw out "two objects, two or three feet (60 cm to one metre) long" into the sea.

"To judge from the circumstances, we believe that there is a possibility that the fallen objects may be illegal immigrants," he said.

Five police launches and a helicopter were sent to search the area. The operation was later scaled down to three vessels but there was no report of any sighting.

The number of mainland children being smuggled into Hong Kong has surged in recent months amid rumors in China that an amnesty will be declared for any caught after the July 1 handover of the territory to Chinese rule.

Many of the migrants have been separated from their parents, who have a permit to work in Hong Kong.

Last Tuesday, 13 illegal immigrants were intercepted, including a 14-year-old boy, a 27-year-old pregnant woman, three girls aged 14 to 15, seven other women aged between 16 and 31 and a 40-year-old man.

They were said to have paid "Snakeheads," or human smugglers, between 1,500 and 5,000 yuan ($180 and $600) to be brought in from the southern Chinese border city of Shenzhen.

Separately, police said they would send two senior officials, the director of operations and assistant commissioner of operations, to Shenzhen shortly to exchange intelligence on illegal immigration to Hong Kong. (AFP)

The 2nd International Young Cinema Festival Winds Up Work



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The 14th National and the 2nd International Young Cinema Festival wound up work Wednesday at Vahdat Hall in the presence of Nateq Nouri, the Iranian Majlis speaker, a thousand young film-makers, some Parliament (Majlis) members, and responsible authorities and deputies of Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, officials from Municipality of Tehran and Bahman Cultural Center.

According to the Public Relations of the festival, the Majlis speaker spoke on the status of cinema in the culture and stressed "no other art is as comprehensive as the seventh art. Cinema is the best tool for fulfilling cultural ends."

The Majlis speaker said assigning the current year as the year of training by the Young Cinema Society was appropriate and added the creativity and innovation should also be considered in the training process.

Engineer Zarghami was the next speaker who in turn elaborated on the activities and achievements of the Iranian young cinema.

Also Mr. Max Hansley, head of UNICA, spoke on the status of Iranian young cinema in his international union saying that Iran is one of the active members of UNICA.

"The problems of people across the world should be solved by the culture" he said "and cinema is a good tool in this regard."

The jury then announced the best artists of the festival as follows:

Photography: Open Section

For the topic of *Our Traditions*, Ali Sajedi from Mashhad received the statuette of the festival and the Diploma of Honor as the best photographer.

As among the photos on *Environment*, Sa'id Khamesipour's photos from Tehran was selected as the best ones.

From among photos on *Happiness*, Ja'far Barati Mehr's (from Shiraz) was the best.

Mohammad Ebrahim Safi from Mashhad bagged the rewards in the *Open* topics.

Photography: Art Students Section

In this section, Mehdi Hamzei from Qazvin, Zahra Jalili from Qazvin, Hassan Qomashi from Esfahan and Navid Azizi from Urumieh won the first awards in the topics of Our Traditions, Environment, Happiness, and Open respectively.

Films

In Nonprofessional Section the reward for the best fiction film went to "*A Drug Might Be*" directed by Hassan Izadi Shahri from Gonabad.

Arisheh, directed by Ahad Ebadi from Urumieh, bagged the best film award in the section of *The Landscape of Our Beautiful Country*.

In the One-Minute Section the first reward went to the "*Sun*" directed Gholamreza Esfahani from Isfahan.

The best screenplay award went for the *Belief* written by Daryoush Gharibzadeh.

In this the best director prize went to Farhad Mehranfar from Rasht for *Me and My Birds*.



In Professional Section the best documentary film prize went to *Me and My Birds*.

The best music reward went to Zahra Khalili from Qazvin for *In the Silence of Night*.

In International Section Ivani Marsel from Hungary bagged the prize for the best documentary fiction *The Wind*.

In this section the best animation prize went to Kihachiro Kavamoto from Japan.

Iranian Student Designs Intelligent Irrigation System



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Following three years of hard studies and experiments, Reza Bakhshi, 17, designed and manufactured machinery for intelligent under-pressure irrigation system.

Bakhshi, a senior math-physics student in Ayandehsazan High School, district four, in an exclusive interview with the *Tehran Times*, elaborated on his innovation.

He said his machinery was working on a central system equipped with electronic and computer instruments. The central system is linked with the surrounding outside by a series of wires and electrodes: the input of the machinery.

The output system includes other electronic pieces linked to water pump or electric tap.

The plan was visited and lauded by President Hashemi Rafsanjani in 1995 and was registered by the Organization for Scientific and Industrial Researches.

According to the young innovator, the new system can automatically water greenhouses, fields and gardens according to the moisture degree.

The new system saves 95% of water, thus competes well with similar ones "if there is one in the world."

Of the other privileges of the new system he referred to the steady irrigation of farm lands, no need to level the ground, watering lands with high penetration rate, reducing labor expenditure, etc. and said: speeding photosynthesis process, the new system can increase the production up to 40-45 percent.

On the mass production of the new system Bakhshi said from the second half of the current year the new system, under the name of Negar System, would be mass-produced.

Concerning the high price and low capabilities of foreign irrigation systems, production of this very system can save considerable hard currency for the country.

Bakhshi has studied the plan for three years and it took him six months to make the system.

Bakhshi is one of the brain students with A averages each year. He does numerous researches along with studying his school subjects. "This is the secret of my success."

On his future plans, Bakhshi said:"I have finished the studies and researches for manufacturing a robot and I will start designing and manufacturing it very soon."

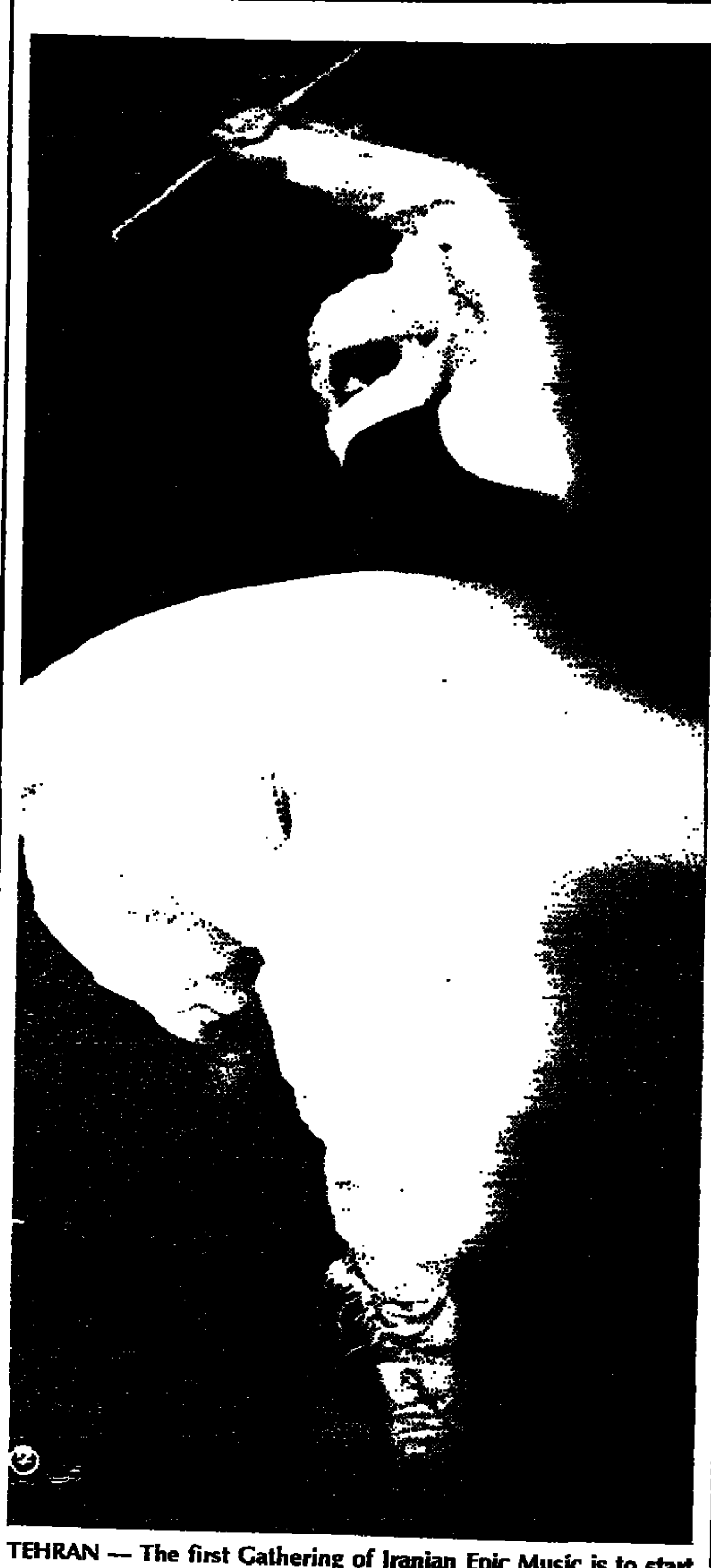
Bakhshi is interested in continuing his education in agricultural machinery field to "be helpful" for his country.

Daily Food for Thought

On Ambition

Ambition has but one reward for all:
A little power, a little transient fame,
A grave to rest in, and a fading name.

WILLIAM WINTER
Queen's Domain



TEHRAN — The first Gathering of Iranian Epic Music is to start work by the music unit of Art Bureau of Islamic Propagation Organization from April 22 in Andisheh Hall. The gathering will last until May 3. Eighteen local music groups from different provinces will have performances in the hall. Andishe Hall is located at Hafez and Somayyeh Junction.

British Archeologist Wants to Set Up Underwater Show

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt — The dean of British Underwater Archeology, Honor Frost, wants to set up an underwater sound-and-light show off the Mediterranean coast of Alexandria for divers and glass-bottom boats.

"I would like to create an underwater museum and a sound-and-light show like the one at the Giza Pyramids to protect the ancient sites," Frost told an international conference organized by the University of Alexandria.

"I made this proposal on my very first visit to this town in 1969, particularly because the Alexandria coast is considered to be one of the wealthiest sites for underwater archeology in the Mediterranean," she said.

Experts at the conference warned that waste water and a breakwater around the Ottoman fort of Qaytbay were harming the foundations of Pharos (lighthouse) Island, on top of which sits the fort.

Built on the remains of the Alexandria Lighthouse, considered one of the Seven Wonders of the world — the fort's sinking foundations could bury forever underwater monuments believed to be in this area.

Frost, said it was possible to set up a lighting and audio system thanks to a very sophisticated technology.

"Undersea treasures should be left where they are and be protected," she said, stressing that objects removed from the sea and put on display at the Alexandria museum had deteriorated.

So instead of visitors heading to the traditional museums, frost suggested that they could board glass-bottom boats the see the underwater archeological sites in their original locations.

"Divers, accompanied by guides, could also take in the sights this way," she said.

Frost stressed that waste water should not be dumped in that area of the Mediterranean in order to protect the underwater sites "which have survived four thousands of years."

Some experts voiced reservations over her project.

"Too much light can trigger the multiplication of algae and harm" the underwater scenery, said Hassan al-Banna, a professor of marine science at Alexandria University.

Born on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Frost began scuba-diving in the south of France in the 1950s before turning this sport into a passion that has taken her off the coast of Lebanon, Syria and Sicily.

She now lives in London, but leaves home frequently to travel to Alexandria to follow up on the archeological finds launched three years ago off the fort Qaytbay.

The mission is carried out by the Alexandrine study center led by French archeologist Jean Yves Empereur, who has found remains of the lighthouse of Alexandria as well as a series of ancient statues.

"I am very happy with the work because the team is doing what I recommended 30 years ago. At the time I did not have the means to do it," said Frost. She said she published the first ever book about underwater archeology in the Mediterranean.

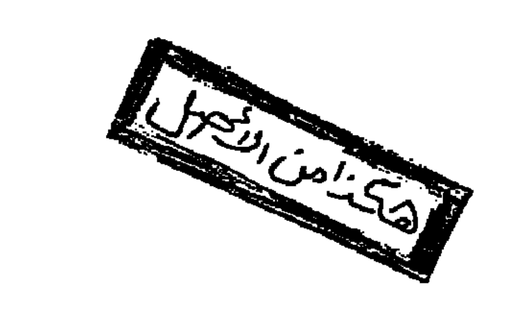
Empereur described Frost as a role-model.

"Thanks to her incomparable experience, he impressive memory, her availability, this lady who has devoted her life to her passions, the sea and its history, is a model for us," he said.

For Frost the passion took root in the west bank town of Jericho.

In November 1996, an amateur French underwater archeologist, Frank Goddio, announced the discovery in the port of Alexandria of the remains of the palace which served as a love nest for Antony and Cleopatra.

(AFP)



Germ

Thousands of Muslims Hold Disavowal of Pagans Rally